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by

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NEW YORK
PRENTICE-HALL, INC.
1939

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PREFACE

Psychology with its practical application has undergone a tremendous change in the last twenty-five years. The average person a quarter of a century ago was not especially interested in gleaning from the archives of the psychologist some idea or principle which could be employed as an aid in solving a personal problem, or to eliminate a disturbing mental condition. Today the average man is so psychology-minded that he is daily inquiring: "How can psychology help me to make my mind more efficient?"

Why this transition from a little to a great interest in psychology as an applied science? Simply because twenty-five years ago there was very little *applied* psychology. The subject was almost entirely academic, quite detached from daily life. It gave very little aid in solving personal problems by studying the various sense organs and by qualitative and quantitative scrutiny of sensations; very little aid by studying the Aristotelian qualitative Laws of Association; very little personal help in trying to understand the thinking processes by wading through the elaborate maze of mostly theoretical difficulties.

But psychology has lost its academic aloofness. No psychologist at present is ashamed to hand out a few ideas that people can use to make the day a little more successful. Once this applied-psychology movement got under way it gathered such momentum that in some colleges and universities today there is not a single course in the entire psychology department that is not, to some extent, an aid to the student in understanding and unraveling his practical difficulties.

But while psychology touches our daily problems, a demand exists for a different kind of application. We have been presenting courses in general psychology, social psychology, Gestalt psychology, abnormal psychology, personality development, and other types with much practical material. Much of this material is practical in a much too impersonal way. Data in these courses have not come close enough to the *personal* difficulties of the individual.

He is interested in knowing how to give and interpret intelligence tests, but he is more interested in knowing how to break a habit. He is interested in the study of the state of mind of a crowd, but he is more interested in knowing how to cure himself of worry. He is interested in the fact that we receive impressions in clusters rather than as separate items, but he is more interested in how to eliminate some of his troublesome fears. He is interested in knowing about complexes, but he is more interested in how to control his anger and irritability. He is interested in knowing the general requirements of an efficient mind as given in a personality course, but he is more interested in knowing just how to control his mind or that of another through suggestion. He wants a psychology that may help him solve his personal problems and eradicate tendencies that interfere with his success.

A good part of this book deals with the explanation and power of suggestion. Though a very potent force for self- and other-person control, suggestion is, however, poorly and often entirely misunderstood. A much needed treatment of this subject is offered, therefore, not from an abnormal but from an everyday standpoint, as suggestion is prevalently employed in our daily contacts with one another.

The title *Mental Hygiene* was chosen because the discussion deals with practical, normal mental health for the average man, in contrast to the drive for mental health for the abnormal individual, so ably launched by Clifford W. Beers when the National Committee for Mental Hygiene was founded on February 19, 1909.

The author is grateful to those who helped him prepare the manuscript, and particularly to Dr. Charles E. Lane, who carefully edited the physiological portions of the writing.

W. H. M.

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I

HABIT

Habit is the most imperious
of all masters. GOETHE

I. INTRODUCTION

Discussions of habit are often limited to a description of bodily movements, or acts of skill, and omit important factors of the mind. Acts of skill naturally lend themselves as test material for an explanation of habit, since such acts can very easily become automatic.

Many think that skills are not only good examples of habits but constitute nearly all the habits of an individual. Yet every division of the mind is habitualized. Everyone has thought-habits as well as habits of skill. One person can predict the general kind of judgment another will pass ten years from now, because ways of thinking become stereotyped. Everyone has feelings-habits. Very few feelings are new and fresh; we have experienced most of them before. Attitudes are mostly feelings-habits, and so are sentiments. Everyone has emotional habits and habits of perception. We hear, see, smell, taste, touch, and so on, according to habit.

The question is often asked: What part of our make-up is composed of habits? The question is easily answered, for a careful study shows that we are mostly habit, if by "make-up" is meant the individuality which we display to others. What is displayed is generally habit. It is true that we reveal to others half-formed and half-developed acts not yet in the habit stage, but these are very few. A poor manner of performance may be very undeveloped and immature,

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but it may be already *set*. We do some things in the same way day by day. First attempts, second attempts, and third attempts often become hardened before the act is completed, just as an iron in the blacksmith's shop becomes cold before the horseshoe is completely fashioned.

What we call personality is a bundle of habits—hardly anything else; it consists of traits, and, by its very nature, a trait is a habit. There must be a certain permanency about a trait or it is not a trait, and it is this permanency which makes it a habit. A trait may be a finished or an unfinished act. An abortive act, or an act not yet crystallized into habit, is not considered a part of personality, for it comes and goes. Only that which is a permanent possession belongs to personality. If a person should manifest a quality which has never before appeared and does not appear again, we say: "Well, that is not really a part of his disposition."

Learning to do a thing, for instance, is a passing process; it is only the thing learned that stays. The learning processes are a mere series of acts which finally lead to some result. As each trial is made, it is forever done, and we are ready for the next step. What is permanently a part of a person is *what is learned*, and not the learning itself. In playing golf, the very steps that lead to a skill in the game are gone—with no regret. The steps in learning to play a piano disappear, or we could not be piano players. While we are often in this temporary processing stage, it is only the thing learned that registers, and this has a relative permanency. Habit has, therefore, touched every corner of our nature; it is the bone and sinew of our lives.

II. CONVENIENCE OF HABITS

A. Personal Convenience

Without habits we would be in a sorry plight—and yet, as we shall show later, we are in a sorry plight because of habits. If we did not acquire habits, life would be only an endless series of trial-and-error performances with nothing permanent or dependable. Everything would be so new that there would be the utmost confusion. One thing is learned today and carried over until tomorrow. If it did not carry over, we would never learn anything. Learning is the modification of our nervous system that stays with us. And this modification is habit.

Consequently, if it were not for habits, we would still be in a primitive stage of civilization, with nothing learned, with no progress. And we would have to say we were in the very *first* of the primitive stages, for certainly the early man soon developed many habits in his crude way of living. Even to conceive of a habitless stage of life is close to impossible, for when we think of the beginning of the early man's existence, we always regard him in a cultural pattern already set up, and this indicates habit formation. The only truly habitless stage is that of the infant before he has learned any habits; but when this stage is, we do not know —perhaps in the first eleven seconds after generation! Even in the prenatal period, habits may be forming which would erroneously be called instincts.

The time and energy saved in habit formation is proverbial. A whole day is devoted by the Hottentot to putting on his first pair of shoes; a prolonged period of preparation that sidetracks everything is devoted to our first little speech before an audience. The day would be spent on just one or two items, and these would be nothing but trifles, if it were not for habit. It is habit that conserves time and energy and allows for progress.

Also, life would probably be quite shortened if we did not have habits. The tremendous prolongation of time devoted to new activities and the accompanying employment of many useless movements with a tremendous waste of energy would probably soon wear out the nervous system. The tear on nerves in starting something untried is a common experience. One can easily imagine the strain on the nerves if everything we did were always new.

A form of fatigue is undoubtedly caused unnecessarily by the fact that many people perform too many activities in their daily program as if they were something new. When they meet a friend in the morning, they never know whether to say, "Good morning," or "How do you do?" or "Nice day?" or "How's the baby?" The idea of an ordinary greeting has never been habitualized, and it is always a problem. It is a little problem, but if the day is filled with hundreds of such problems, which should be mere routine, there is an extra demand on energy. A businessman never knows whether or not to see an insurance agent in his office; a housewife never knows whether or not to give a hearing to a door solicitor; some people are always taking up much time in planning when to eat; a teacher may never be decisive in dealing with students, even when she should know. All these matters are always disturbing, and they consume time and energy. But there is no rule in respect to them. Many items of the day should automatically take care of themselves, thus cutting down fatigue and easing the burden of living.

Habits also allow the mind to give itself to new endeavors. If it were not for habit, we would have to give complete attention to the early stages of a few items, and then our living would be a futile existence. But, since habit makes an act automatic, it enables the mind to be free to dwell on and develop new interests. We can think of a new idea as we dwell on one that is old and habitual. Habits are to the mind what servants are to the home. They allow the mistress—the conscious mind—time and energy to devote to the creative aspects of life.

It is doubtful whether a habit becomes entirely unconscious; a little attention is probably left to guide it. Schneider[1] says that all our habits are accompanied by sensations, however faint; that this is evidenced by the fact that walking, knitting, handling tongs, using a plane, holding a violin, and other habitual acts would stop if it were not for their guiding sensations. These acts, though routinized, are guided by a feeling for them, and this, of course, is a degree of consciousness. A violin player holding a book tight against his body in order to prevent his right elbow from being raised keeps the book in place by these guiding sensations, and, if a set of distracting sensations, such as an aching corn, are set up elsewhere, the book drops. If we are in a room with a clock, we immediately notice it—by ear —when it stops. If the sound of the pendulum had become entirely automatized, we would never have known that the clock had stopped except by looking at it. If walking were not guided by a slight consciousness, we would never know that we were walking except by looking down at our feet.

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[1] Schneider, G. H., *Mental Physiology*, p. 20.

But the guiding sensations that keep us informed whether all is going well are below the level of clear attention, and thus enable us to give our focal consciousness to the new and untried. Hence, habits release rather than fetter thought.

B. Social Convenience of Habit

Since habits are more or less set ways of doing things, their social convenience cannot be overestimated. If a friend acts altogether differently tomorrow from the way he does today, you have to treat him differently, and this readjustment may be very inconvenient. If people changed constantly, you could not lay any plans, for you would not know how to deal with them, or even whether you could depend on them. The bank trusts you with a loan because of your habit of trustworthiness, but if you were too changeable, you would be refused. Business would not be able to carry on efficiently, or even at all, if it were not for habit. Milk is regularly delivered because of habit; groceries are delivered because of habit; the workman is at his bench, the professional man is at his desk because of habit. What a risk we would run if no one followed routine! The name and good will of an institution is a habit, built up in the minds of people. Without a reputation of reliability, we would not know with whom to deal, and business relations would be constantly a problem. A city like London would be thrown into chaos in a day if habits were abandoned, and the entire network of business would be a bedlam.

Habits make both human nature and civilization. They clinch our gains up to date and give us freedom to seek further progress. They take us out of abortive, futile attempts and establish us in efficiency. They stabilize the mind so that men may have a common basis upon which to deal with one another. They make for system and dependability. Without them society would be inconceivable.

But if habits make, they also unmake human nature. They build up, but they also destroy. They are basic necessities of life, but they also create our biggest problems. Habit is one of life's greatest paradoxes. Some of the problems that arise because of it will be considered in the remainder of the chapter.

III. THE DECEITFULNESS OF HABIT

The making of habit, or habituation, throws light on the reasons why human nature retains many of its ills and maladjustments. A new act requires full attention. It is an entangled pattern of wasteful and unnecessary movements, often with not a single correct movement. Our first game of tennis is a clumsy exhibition of awkwardness with a very marked sense of self-consciousness. Our first game of golf did not raise our pride any too high. A sorry uncoördinated exhibition of ourselves, in spite of the fact that full attention is riveted on every item of the ordeal, is always the penalty of a new act. In addition, the time consumed in learning knows no limit. But as we continue to go through the series of trial-and-error movements, with each one different from the preceding one, three changes progressively and gradually take place:

(1) Lessening of attention given to the act;
(2) Lessening of the number of unnecessary movements;
(3) Lessening of the time given to it.

As we learn more and more about an act, we find it becoming automatized—executing itself, as it were—so that attention may be given to other demands. At the last stage of habituation, we find that we act before we know it. We arouse the old opinion on a certain topic before we know it; we stir up an old feeling before we know it; we play with our watch chain, stroke our nose, or hold our chin without realizing it.

But the second stage is also fraught with a significance. As a new act is learned, and trial-and-error movements tend toward the desirable end, the useless movements drop out with all their attendant fatigue, discomfort, and embarrassment. Bodily energy undergoes extensive change. It is no longer wasted; it is harnessed and put under control; it is so economized that no more than is necessary is expended in the act. The thing we tried to do has at last become simplified. It executes itself with ease and skill, with only a slight consciousness accompanying it. The constant exercise of trial and error has at last formed a pathway in the nervous system—a groove has been dug, as it were, and the nerve current, imagined as a stream, pours down this furrow with a frictionless motion. Of course, to speak of a pathway in the nervous system is a figure of speech, for we know little about the inner change in the nerve tissue that follows habituation; but it is a graphic manner of describing the ease with which a habitual act executes itself. An act turned into habit is carried out so smoothly that it functions as if it slides down a slippery chute.

The third progressive step needs no explanation. The time consumed in executing a habitual performance is in great contrast to the time wasted in first learning it.

The second step toward habituation really makes habit a problem. It is the very ease and skill of habit that hinders individual progress. Why? Because skill embodies in itself a pride. What is done well we like whether it is a good or a bad habit. To express oneself freely, without restraint, without friction, with an economy of energy, is the basis for a sense of self-importance. This is a fundamental personality principle. Untrammeled expression is an ideal of the human mind and is the gateway to satisfaction. This perfect execution of a deed, this frictionless expression, is just what a habit is, especially in its last stages. We are, therefore, contented with our habits.

We may be very much dissatisfied, however, by the *content* of habit, by *what we execute* in habit. A habit of anger, of irritability, of worry, of misshapen and awkward acts may cause regret and many poor adjustments, but even such things are *easily* done. When we are prone to anger, irritability, or worry, we fall into them without friction. When a poor carpenter spoils a piece of work, he does it easily. When a person is in the habit of making a regrettable appearance on the speaking platform, he easily falls into this failure. When a weakness of personality of any kind comes, it may come easily. Friction and strain are due largely to a clash between private and social habits, to a suppression or thwarting of habitual desires, or to a frustration of abortive beginnings. Seldom is friction experienced in the execution of habit itself.

We like many things that injure us just because we do them so well. We are fond of our anger because getting angry is one of the best things we do. We are fond of our irritability because we have become experts in being irritable. We love to gossip because we have a reputation for gossiping to uphold; we are the clearing-house for the entire community. We are fond of all of our faults because we display them "perfectly." Not that we love the content of a fault, but we do like the *manner* of its performance.

We therefore are contented with our minds as they are in spite of the numerous challenges on all sides to rehabilitate them. A habit is a rut, and, after all, a rut is comfortable. Even an automobile "prefers" to pick out a rut in the road instead of untried ground.

We want to progress, but we want to stay where we are. We justify a new idea, a new feeling, a new sentiment, a new type of behavior, but we do not adopt it. People often plead for help, but, when a way is pointed out, they do not follow it. They return and say that the method is wrong and want a new remedy. They fail to see the smug contentment of habit lulling them to remain in the old paths even though they may lead to sorry ends. The greatest reason for a habit not being broken is the habit itself. The chief reason for a person's not improving is that he did not improve yesterday. A person does not do a thing today because he did not do it yesterday. Mental hygiene is urging human beings to rise and exert themselves; to shake off the old form and put on a new one; to clean the mind of unhealthful states; to live with mind in control and not in subjection.

IV. TRAINING THE NERVOUS SYSTEM BY EXERCISE

Perhaps the best discussion in James's[2] incomparable essay on habit is the explanation of Carpenter's[3] famous phrase that training indicates a "tendency of the organ to grow to the mode in which it is habitually exercised." The French formula states it thus: "*La fonction fait l'organe*" (The function makes the organ).

As we repeat an act, even in a general way, without a strict duplication of the previous act, the nervous system shapes itself toward this kind of repetition. It rearranges itself to accommodate the kind of exercise we give it. It reconstructs itself to the manner of its use. Carpenter even speaks of the reconstruction of the nervous tissue by exercise.

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[2] James, William, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), Vol. I, Chap. IV ("Habit").

[3] Carpenter, W. B., *Mental Physiology* (1874), pp. 339–345.

What we have in habit formation is not something added to or superimposed *upon* the nervous system; a habit is actually *built into* the tissue, and a nerve pathway acts as if it were actually made before birth for such an act.

An analogy is the tree growing as it is bent. The bending of it in this or that direction determines what kind of tree it is to be. If bent in the wrong direction, as toward the ground, it becomes a gnarled and stunted growth. If bent too much to one side, it becomes a lopsided specimen.

Pliable concrete offers another analogy. It is soft and yielding, but it hardens according to its mold. If it is exercised as an oblong, it becomes an oblong. If it is exercised as a square, it becomes a square. It does not determine its shape itself, but the use of it does. It becomes a square or an oblong as if its very nature were such.

The same idea could be illustrated if we could make a machine the parts of which would mold themselves according to the manner of their operation. But the contrast between an actual machine and the nervous system is shown in the fact that the functions of the machine are determined by the character of its parts, whereas the nervous system makes, as it were, the parts by its manner of operation. Of course, there is a biological limit to such reconstruction. A sluggish nervous system could not become by training the kind of mechanism that would result from a sensitive nervous system. In addition, the plastic nervous system contains raw material of both good and bad quality. But with such a biological limit allowed, there is a large margin for the reconstruction of tissue.

Nothing better illustrates the point that we make our own minds than that we know we can mold the nervous system in a certain way. For as the nervous system is, so is the mind.

The practical implication of such a principle cannot be overemphasized. It accounts, in the first place, for the great inertia of habit. We are not only smugly contented with our habits, but we find them very difficult to break. Our habits are our very nature, not something like an appendix. To break our habits would be to break ourselves. To overcome a habit is to root out a basic part of our being.

This inertia of habit is not mere laziness; it is the very nature of nervous tissue. It is more than mere indifference; it is the mechanism of the nerves. Hence, to break a habit means much more than a mere determination or will power. Such a resolution is empty and futile and fades into thin air, if this is all one has—and this *is* the only weapon many people have. Will power, in the sense of a strong desire, never has overcome habit. A resolve to break a habit is a first prerequisite, but much more should follow. The same principle that makes an old habit must be employed to make a new one: It must be exercised in the desired manner.

This tremendous inertia of habit probably accounts for much of the prevalent fatalism about personality. Habit is so deeply set into the nervous system that it easily provides the impression that we were born as we are, and hence we wonder whether our personalities can be changed. Surprise is constantly aroused when the statement is uttered before an audience that our dispositions are made after and not before birth. The belief in fatalism concerning our natures is more common than we suppose.

"We are as we are and we can do nothing about it" is a thought smugly settled in the minds of many people. When the question of faults is raised about a person, he pleads for tolerance by saying, "You must take me as I am," with the implication that human nature is a gift and not a possession created after birth; that we should not expect a change in a disposition which has been "decreed by the gods." If the thought were thoroughly ingrained in the minds of people that our natures are habits acquired by exercise, and that new aspects of nature can also be acquired, mental hygiene would receive a welcome impetus. The belief in personal fatalism keeps people in their old ruts.

V. INEFFICIENCY AND INFLEXIBILITY OF HABIT

An apparent fatal tragedy is the elimination of older men in industry by transferring them from a responsible to a less responsible job, or by dismissing them altogether because of their years. Little thought is given to this serious problem. There is, of course, some feeling of sadness when an aged worker leaves his bench, his usefulness seemingly over. Traditionally, however, we are resigned to such a change, for retirement is taken as a penalty that all must pay for years of labor.

But a scientific study of the problem indicates that old age is a matter of habit and not of years. Smith,[4] Hollingworth,[5] Sorenson,[6] and others have found that the difficulty of the older worker in learning new methods is due principally not to a decline in learning ability, but to an atrophy of learning habits. Thorndike[7] found that the failure of the adult worker to learn is rarely due to age-inability; it may be habits that interfere, and the adult may not desire to change these habits. Miles[8] conducted an experiment on manual dexterity on 863 subjects ranging from age 6 to 95 with an equal number in each decade; he found that there is only a small decrease in this function with old age. He concluded, in further studies, that it is the neural conservation mechanism that creates the difficulty when the aged try to adapt themselves to new ideas. Age, he said, is neural inhibition. The years have added a weight of sluggishness to the nervous system, making it slow to change. But this weight is not a defect in the nervous system itself; it is only a check on it because of habit. Age puts so much time and energy on a few old habits that it is too loaded down to develop other factors.

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[4] Smith, E. D., *What Are the Psychological Factors of Obsolescence of Workers in Middle Ages?* (1930), p. 3.

[5] Hollingworth, H. L., *Mental Growth and Decline* (1927), p. 396.

[6] Sorenson, H., "Adult Ages as a Factor in Learning," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 21: 459 (1930).

[7] Thorndike, E. L., *Adult Learning* (1928), p. 335.

[8] Miles, W. R., "Change of Dexterity with Age," *Proceedings of the Society of Experimental Biology and Medicine*, 29: 136–138 (1931);

In other words, the difficulty of an older worker is not primarily in the actual wearing down of learning capacity but in keeping it unexercised. Habit becomes so weighty and heavy that it ruins an individual by its own load; it holds down his creativeness. Or habit is like choking vines that lay so thick and heavy on a live plant that it does not grow; the plant is still there with its pulsing life, but it is imprisoned. So learning capacity is still present with the older worker, but it is encrusted with habit.

But there is another hindrance to efficiency as the years go by, and that is the attitude of the aging. Thorndike[9] says there is an unwillingness to change or to re-adapt oneself. Here we see our old feeling of smug contentment aroused by the ease of habit. We can see that it would be very difficult to change to new methods if habits have become very hardened with no ambition to change. But again it is habit and not years.

As Martin and de Gruchy[10] have emphasized, there is also a disagreeable criticism of the younger generation. A

"Measures of Certain Human Abilities Throughout the Life Span," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 17: 627–633 (1931).

[9] *Loc. cit.*

[10] Martin, L. J., and de Gruchy, C., *Salvaging Old Age* (1930), p. 173.

positive attack is launched upon youth, and not merely a negative attitude of unwillingness. Naturally a cynicism would develop against the present order of things, and the older people would say that the "Golden Age" lies in their past. With these states of mind go also slovenliness and laziness. With such a general attitude toward youth, there would be no inclination to meet the world as youth meets it, and to keep up with the times.

But criticism, cynicism, slovenliness, and laziness also grow out of set habits that add no new ones as the years pass. As the old get older, the new seems more out of place, the contrast grows greater, and there is more criticism of the new. A habit is going to conserve itself the older it gets, and as a self-defense mechanism it finds fault. To agree with youth would be to possess a pliable mind. But the older worker is unpliable, and there is nothing new to stimulate and interest him.

Moreover, Miles[11] mentions the self-depreciation and inferiority attitudes held by the majority of older people. This is not strange, for while the older worker criticizes youth, he at the same time, by actually seeing himself demoted, cut in wages, and given less attention, feels a marked humiliation and a severe blow to his pride. Criticism of youth and sadness over decreased influence could easily exist side by side in the same mind. This humiliation further lessens production because it retards energy and ability.

In an indirect way, this self-depreciation is a result of habit. The latter has become so unyielding that the worker is set aside because of a lack of adaptability. His humiliation is a consequence of his stagnated mind. But, as Miles says, the feeling of humiliation is not justified by the data. The decrease in efficiency appears more in feeling than in fact.

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[11] *Loc. cit.*

Surveys of the inefficiency of the older worker bring out these important facts:

I. The inefficiency of the older worker is primarily a matter of hardened habit rather than of years.

II. The inefficiency of the older worker is also due to his unwillingness to adapt himself to new conditions because of hardened habits rather than because of years.

III. The inefficiency of the older worker is also due to a positive attack on new methods growing out of hardened habits rather than of years.

IV. The inefficiency of the older worker is also due to a belittling of the self, which further retards ability indirectly because of hardened habit rather than of years.

Of course, we have a biological limit to consider. The aged must drop out of many jobs because of age itself; some work is only for the young and strong. But if we find that the decrease in efficiency of older workers as a whole is due *primarily* to an inflexibility of habit and not of years, then we emphasize something paramount in the field of mental hygiene. A few old men must step aside because of actual age, but when the worker at forty, fifty, or sixty is sidetracked and youth surplants him, unless the work be purely muscular in nature, then the trouble is more a weight of habit than a weight of years.

La fonction fait l'organe is seen at its tragic worst in the older worker. By a constant and unchangeable way of thinking, feeling, and doing, he has so ingrained in the tissue of his nerves such a toughness that habit may finally unmake the individual and set him on the sideline of uselessness.

If an older worker is losing his efficiency because of habit rather than because of age, then tests and remedial service applied to such an individual should prove this point. Many cases are on unofficial record where age has revived efficiency by breaking away from hidebound habit.

In the city of the writer is an elderly lady in her seventies who "transformed" her life, as she said, at the age of sixty. In all of her married life up to this point, she had been like Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House.* Her husband's every wish was her wish; his welfare was her welfare; his need of service was her service. She molded her mind to suit her husband. Her only kind of existence was rigid, servile conformity and obedience. She never lived her own life or developed her own nature. Her mind was smothered, and grafted into it were the habits formed by years of doll-like clinging to her stern and demanding husband.

Finally she decided to revolutionize her manner of living—not with bold and "bloody" battle, but in a quiet and unobtrusive style, aided by a study of practical psychology. She planned her own life by first having her own excellent books, by organizing study groups in which she pursued a great variety of subjects, by aiding worthy people in the community, by joining new organizations, by entertaining extensively her own friends, and by becoming an active worker in the community. All this was radically new. She destroyed the inertia of her old habits and released the choking vines about her learning capacity. Her life is now a happy surprise to her many friends when they contrast it with the dull servility of the long stretch of years prior to sixty.

The writer has an official record of one of his clinical cases pertaining to a jewelry salesman who came to him at the age of fifty-eight for counsel. The salesman said that he had got into a rut and was afraid of the loss of his job with little hope of getting anything else worth while.

Upon writing his Chicago firm, the author received the following record:

Name— Department—*Jewelry salesman covering three of the Middle Western States* Age— *58*

Physical condition—*Excellent* Work Record—*A decreasing output in the past five years, a drop of 40 per cent of employment value during this period. At one time was the second best salesman of the firm, but was fast becoming the highest selling cost of the establishment.*

A psychological examination revealed:

An I. Q. of 115, a high-strung nervous system but grown dull; reaction time slowed up. Memory for names and faces good—social intelligence high—had a pronounced feeling of inferiority and insecurity—was given to reminiscing as a compensation for his present loss of prestige—his ambition dampened by fear of the future—was quite introverted.

His average daily program:

He was a bachelor with little interest in the opposite sex and seldom dated. While in Chicago would spend necessary time in the store, but after work hours went to no plays, movies, concerts, lectures, or operas. Had few social friends and seldom went out with them, but spent nearly every night at home with his widowed mother. While on the road he kept to himself when he registered at a hotel. He followed the same line of approach in his sales appeal as he did twenty years before—never read any new sales material and never went to any kind of convention, and his reading was confined to the daily newspaper.

Psychotherapy:

He was given an explanation of the inertia of habit and the information that inefficiency may not be a matter of age but of inflexibility of nature.

Remedial program:

1. To spend four nights a week while in Chicago in going to a play, movie, concert, or lecture or with his social friends, male or female.

2. While on the road he was to spend an hour in the evening in talking to men in the hotel lobby.
3. He was to read a book once a week, not on business.
4. He was to buy new sales manuals and constantly study them.
5. While in Chicago, he was to organize a study group on new sales methods among the salesmen in the store.
6. He was to attend some manufacturers' convention at least once a year.
7. He was to join at least one civic betterment organization.

Every three months when he was in the author's vicinity he was to report. His first visit after these instructions showed new vigor and an increase in sales. After four visits of such a nature the author wrote his firm for his work report.

April, May, June	5% increase in sales over the past five years
July, Aug., Sept.	15% increase in sales over the past five years
Oct., Nov., Dec.	24% increase in sales over the past five years
Jan., Feb., March	46% increase in sales over the past five years

It might be said that a change of market conditions was responsible for this increase of production, but his firm is convinced that it is due to the change in the man himself—a breaking forth into new endeavor to change the inflexibility of his old habits.

VI. DEMAND FOR NEW ADVENTURE

However, the best remedy is not cure but prevention. Drifting into a habit inertia is too great a risk, and entails too much inefficiency, with its attendant humiliation. Why wait until habit has produced a paralyzing effect as the years pass?

After the twenties, a man should observe his old habits and take steps to prevent an inflexibility that would make it difficult to re-adapt himself to new conditions. The thirties begin the dangerous period of habit formation. James[12] says that by the age of thirty habits have set like plaster and will never soften again. In the general run of mankind this is true. After this age, we tend to live only on the interest of our previous experience. Life becomes nothing but a rehash of our former years—few new sentiments, few new emotions, few new feelings, few new ideas that arise from new endeavors. We get into many novel activities but they are only outwardly new. The inner man remains the same. We tackle new activities with our old habits and when new experiences arise, they result mostly from clashing of habit against the challenging problems of the day—they are feelings of being lost, of regrets at not producing more, of sadness at the passing years, of failure. These are penalties that arise from habit maladjustment. Very few of these negative feelings arise from force of circumstances over which we have no control, called "acts of God" by the legal profession. They are largely due to one's settling into a vise of habit, and for this, man is responsible. Positive feelings of thrill and inspiration come from new activities entered into because of a change of heart, in an endeavor to keep the mind pliable with the changing years.

Many have pointed the way to this desired pliability of mind. The United States Department of Labor announced that statistics compiled by the National Federation of Business and Professional Women jointly with Bryn Mawr College showed that age is an asset in many lines of endeavor. Questionnaires from nine states and the District of Columbia submitted to women workers revealed that women over sixty years of age earn the highest salaries. The late Professor Shaler, of Harvard, said that "between the forty-fifth and the fiftieth year, observing people have noticed in women a considerable enlargement of intellectual interest." The famous Italian Luigi Cornaro, given up to die at forty, wrote a book when past ninety, died when well past one hundred, and wrote to the bishop in Venice, "I had to live to be ninety to know this world is beautiful." Cincinnatus, at eighty, heeded the call of Rome, left his plow, and became dictator of the Roman Empire. The average age of our presidents when elected has been fifty-five. Ira A. Ridgeway of Wisconsin at eighty-three, had spent fifty years as a photographer, turned to painting, and his canvasses have sold for as high as $150. At forty, Grant was considered a failure, but at forty-two he was considered one of the greatest military commanders of the century. Justice Miller began to study law at thirty-seven, and in twelve years was appointed to the bench of the Supreme Court. Collis P. Huntington at forty was a phlegmatic unsuccessful hardware dealer, but later headed a tremendous financial enterprise. Olof-Hermelin became a famous painter in Europe, and yet he never touched a brush until he was forty-six. Eliel Saarinen, of Michigan, did not take up piano until he was fifty-two, and when sixty (1934) was proficient in the art.

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[12] *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

Many more examples could be given of the successful testing of creative powers at a time when age usually puts people deeper into ruts. The simple prevention of inflexibility of habit is in attempting new endeavors with a desire to prevent mental stagnation. Nature does not stand in the way. It is only man himself. Very varied should be a man's ventures when he reaches the dangerous thirties.

First, everyone should begin early in life to break even the rigidity of routine habits about the home. A certain time of rising may frequently be changed just to prevent its solidifying, even if it is not necessary to meet the demands of the day. To change the newspaper habit is desirable occasionally—its omission now and then, an occasional use of other than the favorite chair for reading, a subscription now and then to a new newspaper. The wife should vary her style of cooking and her kinds of food. The style of suit, shirt, and necktie of a man should be frequently changed (women need no such instruction). The manner of spending evenings at home should be continually varied. A prevention of inflexibility of routine habits would start the most desirable habit of not forming set habits, if they could rightly be called habits.

Second, a man should constantly vary his book and magazine reading. If he is accustomed to fiction, he generally reads nothing else; in that case, let him change often to nonfiction. He may be accustomed to reading only poetry (which is rare), but let him change by adding some historical literature. He may be accustomed to only one kind of magazine, but let him change to another—from political magazines to sports magazines, from economic journals to sociology journals, from pure literature to writings on business. Inflexibility of habit is readily seen in the fixed type of reading a man follows.

Third, a man should vary his organizations. A "joiner" may be occasionally criticized, but membership in different organizations stimulates new interests, new contacts, and new points of view. And he should never be merely a silent listener, but a participating active member.

Fourth, a man should constantly vary his hobbies. A constant and exclusive attention to a hobby may destroy it as a hobby, because it may control instead of serve the individual. A constant and unchangeable repetition may also turn a hobby into an inflexible habit, and that would destroy the hobby, which in its very nature is always new and fresh. Hobbies are too often killed by a monotonous repetition, though a hobby need not be set aside to secure variation. A man can vary a hobby itself to prevent a dulling solidification.

Fifth, a man should constantly add to his social circle. Many confine themselves to only a limited number of people in their social intercourse, which consequently becomes too often merely a conventional performance. New friends through the years throw a challenge to maintain the spark of social contact that comes when friendship is in the making. There is as much of a thrill in making as having made friendships, and often more thrill, since completed friendship may wear away by dull, unfruitful repetition. A large number of people have not made a new friend in five or even twenty years.

Sixth, interest and participation should be constantly centered on new movements, new causes, striking changes in public opinion, fads, and fashions. There should be constant discussion of current events, for it is one means to keep the mind open and pliable.

Seventh, a planned attempt should be constantly made to travel in different parts of the country each year, or to vary the interest in the scenic effects of a regularly visited place. Travel keeps the mind from hardening.

There are two principal results in training the mind to keep pliable:

1. The constant preparedness to adapt oneself to new conditions—a readiness to step into a new job or task at any age—thus preventing the blow to the ego of being set aside because of inefficiency.

2. The personal enjoyment and satisfaction of keeping the mind young and fresh—permitting a growing appreciation of the interest, old and new, of life, made possible only when the mind has not paid the penalty of habits that check and hinder. Youth thrills at life because of youth. But a mind kept pliable through the years is a perpetual youth. Creativeness is the flower of flexibility and youthfulness. To be interesting, life requires the newness and freshness of nerve paths. Tapping new goals taps the unused portions of the brain, and we thereby grow young again. The creativeness of the genius, as Hall[13] says, is caused by the startling adventures into the untried, and by giving the mind a perpetual "moldability." Each individual may possess a little of the quality of the genius.

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[13] Hall, G. S., *Adolescence* (1904), Vol. I, p. 309.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Name some of your emotions, feelings, and ways of considering problems that are habits.

2. Describe the condition of a city suddenly stripped of its habits.

3. Why are habits necessary?

4. Why is it a good biological provision that our nervous systems grow to the way they have been exercised?

5. Discuss several reasons why habit is one of the paradoxes of life.

6. Why is the so-called habit of preventing inflexibility not a strict habit?

7. In what different ways may the term "old age" be used?

8. How much does nature determine an inflexibility of mind?

9. How much does nature allow for constant creativeness?

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II

THE BREAKING OF HABIT

Habit is altogether too arbitrary
a master for me to submit to.
LAVATER

I. THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

For the purpose of mental hygiene there is no more important topic than habit-breaking, for mental rehabilitation can be accomplished in a major way only by breaking bad habits.

But while habit-breaking is of paramount importance if a man is to gain in mental efficiency, it is a topic which receives the least scientific and really practical treatment. Remedies for habit-breaking are mostly still a product of guesswork and a continuation of traditional methods spun out years ago by mere armchair thinking.

The most prevalent method for breaking a habit is by use of will power. It is generally taught that if one has enough determination to overcome a habit, he will do it. Such resolutions are very frequent, especially on New Year's Eve. It is very true that determination embodies a desire to overcome a difficulty and the latter is a first prerequisite to the elimination of a habit. But most people do not arrive even at this first step.

But the common trouble with the will-power method is that it lacks an understanding of a habit, and also a technique. The meaning of a habit in terms of the mind and nervous system is not grasped, and there is little desire to grasp it. Moreover, there is no carefully prepared means of supplementing will power to eliminate habit. A lack of technique is entirely futile, and will power without it is just as futile. It is like trying to plant a tree in the forest by just wishing that it could be done.

To overcome a habit is difficult enough even when its difficulty is understood and a technique is devised to meet it. If the technique of habit-breaking were a settled matter, human nature would have a ready panacea for its problems. But, since "*La fonction fait l'organe*" makes habit a part of the very texture, as it were, of our nervous system, the elimination of habit will always be a problem. But human nature is not so simple to change. The several techniques proposed in the present chapter are, therefore, offered only as various attempts to meet the serious task of habit-breaking. One technique is successful with one type of habit, but not with another. In addition, one person may profitably employ for a habit a technique not profitably employed by another.

II. THE METHOD OF THE CONDITIONED REFLEX

When the famous Russian physiologist Pavlov[1] introduced to the world the principle of the conditioned reflex, he furnished an excellent remedy for the elimination of certain types of habit. While he did not emphasize its value as a practical remedy, it is nevertheless used extensively in clinical and personal consultation work. There may be some question as to what takes place within the brain with the use of the conditioned reflex—whether it implies the old theory of association or bond-making, or a new method theory—but there is little doubt as to what takes place in a curative way.

Pavlov wanted to study a response independent of volition, and as a test selected the salivary responses in the dog. We know that food placed in the mouth causes an increase in the flow of saliva, or "makes the mouth water"; even the smell of food will produce the same effect, although the latter is already a conditioned reflex.

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[1] Pavlov, I. P., *Conditioned Reflexes: An Investigation of Physiological Activity of the Cerebral Cortex* (1927).

The sound of a buzzer or a bell, however, produces no such saliva responses as food does in the mouth. It means no more, for instance, to the dog's saliva than a tree means to a human being in this respect. But Pavlov demonstrated that a buzzer could start the dog's salivary responses by completing a relatively simple experiment.

He devised a box, or stall, for the dog, with a harness fastened to the stall to keep the dog in a fixed though comfortable position. On a table in front of the dog was a bowl of food from which the dog was allowed to eat at certain intervals. In order to measure the flow of saliva, Pavlov made an incision in the dog's cheek and inserted a glass tube to catch the flow of saliva in a pan. In this way the saliva deposit could be accurately measured. It was found, as Pavlov expected, that prior to the experiment the buzzer itself had no influence upon the salivary flow. The main experiment was in giving the animal food and sounding the buzzer at the same time. After a number of repeated trials of this simultaneous presentation of the original or main stimulus (food), and the accompanying incidental stimulus (buzzer), the *buzzer alone* incited the saliva flow. The incidental stimulus took the place of the main stimulus through association, and produced the same response.

A convenient way of understanding the practical working of the conditioned reflex is by means of the triangle diagram in Figure 1. The right angle represents the main stimulus, which may be original, that is, innate, or acquired. The upper acute angle represents the incidental stimulus, which, as we have said, by association with the principal stimulus, comes to take its place and to initiate the same response. In the completion of the conditioned reflex, only a straight line remains of our original triangle. This convenient device for demonstrating this reflex is not applicable to cases where a conditioned response may be created by the incidental stimulus *preceding* the main stimulus.

It is necessary before applying the conditioned-reflex principle to the elimination of a habit to stress the meaning of the incidental stimulus. The word "incidental" in this connection has at least three meanings: (1) It has no logical relationship with the main stimulus; that is, it has no real connection with it except by a mere juxtaposition in space and time, as a piece of shoe leather, for instance, would have no logical connection if placed alongside an apple; (2) it might be insignificant in itself, or of little economic value; for instance, a wornout shoestring could be an incidental stimulus to produce the response of the main stimulus with which it could be associated; (3) it is in the background of attention; it is unobtrusive. If this buzzer were so prominent that it superseded the food in attention value, it would naturally be no longer an incidental but a main stimulus.

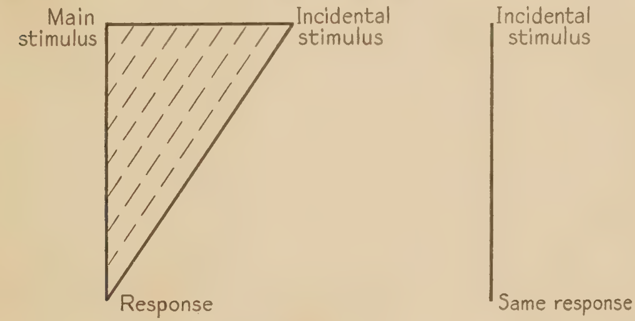

Figure 1.

These three meanings of "incidental" should be borne in mind in considering the practical value of the conditioned reflex.

Another fact to emphasize is that the word "reflex" indicates that its working is mechanical or automatic. This is exactly the case with the response in question. The incidental stimulus does not assume the function of the main stimulus by consent or voluntary decision of the individual. It assumes such a power of itself. Its effect is insidious and unconscious. It is one of the most mechanical factors in our lives. As a result, many incidental stimuli are acting upon us without our control, just as a puppeteer pulls the strings of a puppet which it operates. Incidental stimuli make mechanical dolls of individuals. We pride ourselves on our intelligent control, but a canvass of the number of conditioned reflexes that have *built themselves* into our lives indicate how extensively we are mere puppets in the hands of illogical, insignificant, and background stimuli. Environment, through the conditioned reflex, is exerting a tremendous control over the human being, *independent of his wish or will.*

Emotions, feelings, attitudes, as well as bodily mannerisms, are released automatically, because they have come under the mechanical monarchy of the incidental stimulus in a conditioned reflex.

But strange to say, if an incidental stimulus creates a conditioned reflex and thereby sets up a habit, this very response may be cured by means of the conditioned reflex; the same thing is true of a response not originally set up by a conditioned reflex. This technique is illustrated by means of the triangle. As we have explained, when a habit is formed by means of the conditioned reflex, the incidental stimulus, by being associated with a main stimulus, takes the place of the main stimulus, and the triangle is turned into a straight line. When, on the other hand, a bad habit is to be eliminated, the triangular arrangement must be restored. What was previously the incidental stimulus is restored as the incidental stimulus. In place of what was previously the main stimulus is a pleasing or beneficial stimulus. This technique will induce a pleasant result from the previously unpleasant incidental item, because the incidental stimulus takes over the function of the main pleasant stimulus.

A married graduate student complained that he was thrown into instant confusion by being asked to recall a name, date, or any item. Even when his first child was born and a neighbor asked its name, his inability to recall it led to a great embarrassment. When by himself he could easily recall such items. It was assumed by the author that such an odd confusion was a result of a conditioned reflex; that at some time in the past the student was asked to recall something in the midst of a crisis or difficulty, and, ever since, the confusion had automatically occurred when he was asked to recall something. In other words, it had become a habit without any justification for its present continuance save only the mere momentum of itself.

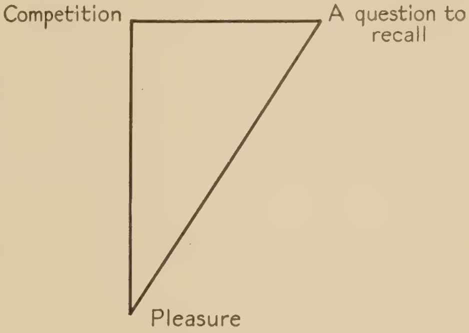

Figure 2.

He was asked to apply the principle of the conditioned reflex to his difficulty. It was suggested that he think of his problem in a triangular form, the right angle, or main stimulus, serving as a competition for a prize, the upper acute angle, or incidental stimulus, serving as recall stimulus, and the lower acute angle as the hoped-for result, namely, a lack of confusion. This relationship is brought out graphically in Figure 2. But the recall stimulus was to be lessened in effect, or kept in the background as an incidental stimulus, in the sense of eliciting little attention. So it was proposed that a game be played with his wife and two others in which he was to recall the names of the capitals of the various states when asked for them by one of the outsiders.

The one who recalled the greatest number got the prize. But the purpose of the game was to be kept a secret, and he alone was to memorize all the names of the capitals before the game was played. In this way it was felt the recall would be easy and not occasion much attention, and also incidental because it was subservient to the excitement of competition, which constituted the main stimulus.

After a number of such trials, the subject found his embarrassment decreasing and his ability to recall increasing in the presence of others. Then his wife was instructed to ask him in a very casual way for the name of a school teacher in his building or some other name which he knew well; but she was to ask when he was engrossed in a very pleasant and absorbing task, such as reading an interesting book. He finally cured himself of his recall difficulty in this manner.

Another pupil, a university senior twenty-one years of age, acknowledged that he was afraid to go down in his home basement at night because of the darkness. A conditioned-reflex treatment was suggested. It was proposed that he take a novel with an absorbing theme, a rocking chair, and his dog in the cellar just before dark, and stay until he had spent about a half hour down there. At that time he was to read in his rocker with his dog beside him for nine minutes; then he was instructed to turn off the lights for about one half a minute. This would make three readings and three dark periods in the course of about half an hour. His conditioned-reflex setup is shown in Figure 3. Every night while home, he was to practice with the nine-minute periods. After seven days he was to shorten his reading and lengthen his dark periods, reading for three eight-minute periods and staying in darkness for three one-minute periods for seven days. Then a third change was to follow; for seven days he was to cut his reading to five minutes and increase his dark period to five minutes.

The subject made only one trial of the third schedule, because his fear of the dark had disappeared. And when he made his final report, he said that he could go down in the basement in the dark as a matter of fact. The short-time periods of darkness associated with the pleasant situation of a dog and a fascinating novel probably served as an incidental stimulus.

In a number of cases an amateur speaker's fear of an audience was probably overcome by means of the conditioned reflex. The subject was asked to mount the platform in front of an audience, but only in company with someone in whom he had implicit confidence and from whom he received inspiration. The first time he was to do nothing; the second to the fifth time, he was to make a brief announcement. From the fifth to the tenth, he was to go a step further and introduce the main speaker, but with only a single sentence.

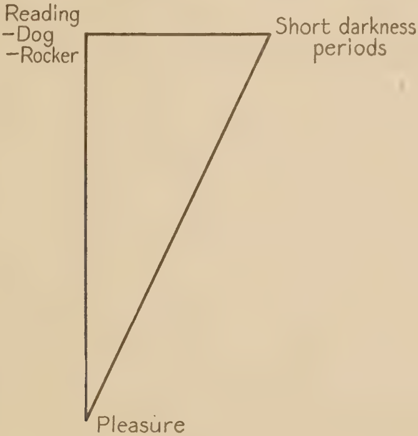

Figure 3.

In Figure 4, we see the conditioned-reflex setup. The principal speaker with his training and self-confidence is the main stimulus, the minor speaking tasks in front of the audience are the incidental stimulus, and the response is the pleasure generated.

By using this technique, it was hoped that being before an audience would occasion confidence if the subject had only an insignificant part of the program. Just being on the platform would not be quite sufficient, and making a regular speech would be too much. But the performance of very minor tasks would give the tyro the little practice that he needed and at the same time make his part of very little worth. In a number of cases where it was tried, the method seemed to be effective. It may be said that this is not the elimination of an old but the development of a new habit. Yet the amateur possessed a fear of an audience which was already in the habit stage.

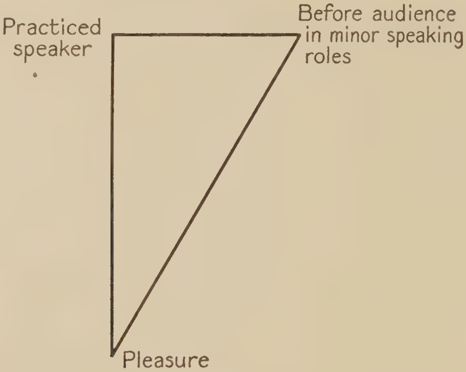

Figure 4.

Another application of the conditioned-reflex principle was used with a child who had an unusual fear of a golf bag. The father of a two-year-old boy had come home from a game of golf, and when the youngster saw his bag, he was terror-stricken and started to cry. The father was at a loss to explain such a reaction, for the child had never seen him play, or even seen a golf course. After a day or two the father went into the closet where he had put a heavy roll of creosote paper that he had used for the under side of an oak floor which he was laying. The roll was the same size and had the same brown color as the golf bag. The father surmised, when he saw the roll of paper on the floor, that the child had knocked it down, and the noise on the bare oak floor had very much frightened him; the fear of the golf bag was produced by the conditioned reflex, the main stimulus being the noise, the response being fear, and the incidental stimulus being the roll of paper like the golf bag. As discovered by Pavlov, anything *like* the incidental stimulus serves in place of it.

In applying the conditioned reflex to cure this conditioned reflex of fright, the father bought a brand-new toy every day and put it in the center of the library floor with the golf bag way back in the corner. Each day a new toy was bought and placed in the same position, but the golf bag was moved up a little closer every day. Here we have the typical conditioned-reflex arrangement, with the toy serving as a main stimulus, the golf bag more or less out of sight serving as the incidental stimulus, and the response, that of pleasure. On the tenth day, the golf bag was so near that the father put the toy on the bag's ball pocket. The child slowly but without fright reached for the toy. After three days of placing the toy on the pocket of the bag, the child took the bag as a matter of course. On the fourteenth day, its milk bottle was placed *in* the pocket of the golf bag, and the child instantly went for it with no apparent fright. Now the father may find himself on the golf course without any golf balls or some of his clubs—the child having taken them for playthings.

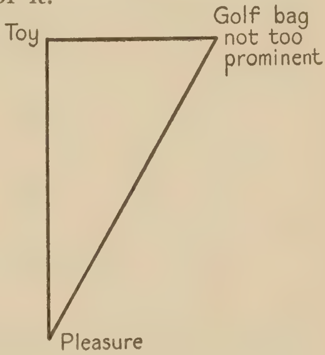

Figure 5.

Places or objects that are feared could be incidental stimuli to a very satisfying stimulus, and in this way be freed from fright. A haunted house could be made a minor matter in conjunction with a game or celebration, and then made more important as the affair is repeated. A hedge which is a fright stimulus to an acquaintance of the author could be made to serve a very minor role if it were the place for the receipt of an attractive sum of money, or the signing of an important contract. The reason why people do not overcome fear of places or objects is that they never go near them at all, or if they do, they are too prominent in attention, and then they serve as a main instead of an incidental stimulus.

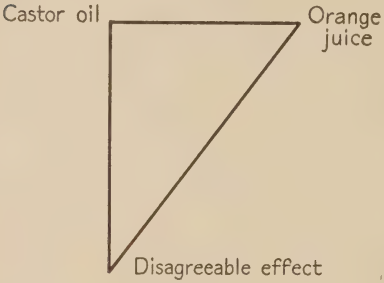

Figure 6.

It should be noted, however, that the factor to be overcome must be an incidental stimulus in at least the first and third meaning of the term, that is, in having no logical relationship with the main stimulus, and, in the second place, in being kept in the background with little attention called to itself. Mothers, attracted by the prospects of the conditioned reflex, often try it out to train their youngsters to like castor or cod-liver oil. These disagreeable dietary necessities are accordingly given to the child in orange juice or in some other food. But the oil is *so prominent* in attention value that it is far from being an incidental factor in the situation, and becomes the main stimulus, with the orange juice an incidental stimulus. Naturally, the opposite effect is produced—the orange juice elicits the same bad reaction as the oil and the child does not like orange juice thereafter. If the oil could be given in very small doses at first and then gradually increased so that it would not be prominent in attention, the orange juice might be saved the fate it usually meets; but this is problematical.

Many things are so powerful in their effect that they cannot be overcome by means of the conditioned reflex. It is very difficult to make them incidental in the sense of keeping them in the background of attention. Anger, irritability, jealousy, hatred, revenge, and other emotions can hardly be subject to control by means of the conditioned reflex. We would find it difficult to take an object of our hatred, for instance, and make the object a very small part of a situation. It cannot be controlled in this respect. If we could associate the person repeatedly in a very unobtrusive manner with a smile, or a cordiality-invoking stimulus, then in the course of time we would eliminate the hate against him. We actually do find occasionally that when the object of wrath happens to be unobtrusively present in a happy situation, there is a lessened inclination to feel a hatred against him; but this association is not repeated a sufficient number of times to break the habit.

Fears, on the other hand, are very often impersonal in character, being directed toward objects or places which we may control and make incidental stimuli in a situation. Even the fear of an audience is impersonal. Persons in a group are not feared; it is a supposedly impersonal psychic force, which some falsely think constitutes a group mind, that is feared.

Of course, when we apply the technique of the conditioned reflex to fears, we are *preventing* their full occurrence rather than eliminating them after they have fully occurred. If we tried to undo a fear when it was fully upon us, or any emotion, by means of the conditioned reflex, it would be impossible, for no emotion can be made an incidental part of a situation.

III. THE NEGATIVE METHOD

A. New Habits Cannot Be Repeated at First

It has long been known that certain habits can be broken by what Dunlap[2] calls the negative method—by doing the very thing to be eliminated. An effective way to remember a name of a street, for example, is to miscall it deliberately; an effective way to overcome a mistake in piano-playing is to commit the error deliberately.

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[2] Dunlap, Knight, *Habits, Their Making and Unmaking* (1932).

Dunlap emphasizes the point that the traditional idea of overcoming a habit by repeating the desired substitute-response is far from a general truth. In fact, it is an exception. If we have developed a habit of carping criticism, it is impossible at first to repeat the behavior of toleration or praise, because the organism is not prepared to repeat this response. How can it repeat it when it has not yet been attained? The nerves and muscles of the body are trained in another direction. The old habit of criticism has built itself into the nerves and muscle tissue—we grow to the way we have exercised. Ability or skill has not yet been developed to repeat the new response. The body has not been *molded* in this direction, or carping criticism would not be the "order of the day."

There is the old assumption that a mere wish, will power, or determination can start a new habit and repeat the newly desired response. But habit-making is essentially *performance.* As we have learned in the previous chapter, habit-making is activity of the body, a *practicing* matter, whether conscious or unconscious, until the final result has been reached. Habit-making is caused principally by *doing,* and not principally by thinking or feeling. Since any habit, therefore, is something *constructed into* the nerve and muscle tissue, how can anyone repeat the new act when it is not yet made? It must be in the habit stage before it can be repeated. An old habit must be rooted *out* and a new act gradually *rooted in* before one can repeat the new response.

It is true that at first we can be conventionally tolerant or can give praise in our desire to overcome a carping attitude, but this sort of tolerance and praise-giving is very far from the habit stage we want to attain. It is merely an approximation of it—a sort of rough likeness, a superficial resemblance. The feelings of a person have not yet been sufficiently *turned* in the new direction. The new act is still in the trial-and-error stage. Ease of performance is certainly not present; the act is done with strain and effort. These are not present in the habituated act. The nerves and muscles involved in these acts are not yet flexible in their use. The enjoyment, if there be any, in these trial-and-error stages is not the kind of enjoyment desired in the completed act when the habituated behavior is easily and skillfully performed. We may say that enjoyment is not really present when we are first performing a new act. The use of the term in this connection is far fetched and falsely employed. Learning a new act is hard work, especially when a habit is to be unmade; and it is a question whether hard work is enjoyable. Aristotle[3] said that pleasure is the result of a well-performed act, and this stage is not reached until the act is *made*, not while it is *being* made.

A carpenter in planing a board does not repeat the response he wants until *after* skill has been attained; he repeats mostly clumsy and awkward acts. In learning to speak we do not start by repeating a finished presentation; we repeat the rough attempts of the amateur. The delivery we want is repeated only after we have learned it. In learning to be cordial to others, instead of being harsh, we do not repeat spontaneous cordiality, which is the only kind there is. We repeat only *efforts* in this direction. This spontaneous cordiality comes after we have learned the process.

We, therefore, must conclude that learning "a response by performing the response" is a figure of speech.

B. Learning and Learned Are Different

Dunlap,[4] in his treatment of habit, shows that we mistake the result of learning for the learning process. These are very different, as the above discussion indicates. The steps we employ in learning to be tolerant are very different from the final result. The stages are attempts, whereas the result is the finished product. If *what* we are learning were the same as the learning, we would never learn anything. We would always be at the trial-and-error level. It is true, therefore, that we can learn one thing by doing another. In learning a poem, we first plan on doing it, then we repeat the lines, and then we try to recall, but the latter is halting and inefficient. The learning itself is effort, while the *learned* poem is *effortless;* it comes by rote.

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[3] Aristotle, *Ethics*, Seventh Book.

[4] Dunlap, Knight, *op. cit.*, Chap. II.

Since learning in the usual way is a matter of effort, why not try a new method whereby the learning process *itself* is effortless? This is Dunlap's idea. This effortless learning is repeating the old habit to get rid of it. Hence the learning of a name of a street by deliberately misnaming it, and correcting a mistake by deliberately making the mistake.

C. *Dunlap's Method*

However, in actually making a mistake in order to overcome it, the subject must bear in mind that he is following this seemingly strange method *in order to break* the habit. Otherwise the habit would continue.

Five conditions are necessary:

(1) The subject must understand the situation and realize the full handicap that the old habit constantly brings upon him.

(2) The subject must clearly see the excellent benefits of eliminating a bad habit.

(3) The subject must have a desire to break the old habit.

(4) The subject must persistently practice the negative method.

(5) The subject must realize that he is not to avoid the performance of an act outside of practice; to let his old

habit proceed as it will; that effort to avoid doing it will tend to fix the habit a little more.

Dunlap says that the negative method in curing stammering seems to be effective. To try to induce the subject to avoid stammering in his practice period is asking him to do something he cannot yet do. It would induce only rough and sad attempts in the right direction; it would be trying to cure him by a hard route. But he *can stammer,* and he can stammer *easily.* So let him stammer in his own convenient way under the supervision of the psychologist. Some subjects, after practicing this method for four or six months, have only a little difficulty in speaking correctly, and they can overcome this with no further treatment. Dunlap has also cured habits of daydreaming and lack of concentration by the negative method.

D. *Comments*

The negative method as illustrated by Dunlap is not *strictly* a negative method. After all, the subject is being trained in *controlling* his muscles by deliberately stammering; it is no longer an unconscious performance. He is bringing the muscles under conscious supervision and training his body to do *what he wants it to do.* And muscle control is what is desired and attained in order to avoid stammering. In this sense, we are strictly learning a thing by doing its opposite; the peculiarity of the method is in exercising this control through an opposite medium. So it is in respect to curing daydreaming. If a man is cured of daydreaming by daydreaming, he is learning to *control* his imagery, and this is what he needs in his new habit of attending to business and avoiding the waste of idle thoughts. In learning to concentrate by scattering attention, he is actually learning to concentrate on the scattering of attention, and this concentration is the desired result. He is, therefore, learning by repeating with muscle control the response to be avoided.

E. Explanation

The plausibility of the negative method is seen by our indication that the subject is actually performing the very thing he needs for completion of a new habit, namely, *control.* He is exercising this control merely in the easiest way instead of through the arduous method of first trying to repeat the new act, which can be done only in a very bungling manner.

Another explanation of the plausibility of the negative method is that the disagreeableness of a bad habit is so forcibly brought to the subject's attention that he soon drops it. The author has cured cases of nail-biting and tics, such as the sudden twisting of the head, by having the subject stand before a mirror six times a day for five minutes at a time, deliberately performing in conscious attention the very habit itself to be overcome. It generally takes but a few days to have the subject report that he is no longer afflicted with such an annoying habit.

A person will not continue a habit if he thoroughly dislikes it. The objection may be raised that many disagreeable habits, such as dope-taking, drunkenness, gossiping, and others, continue, even after there is a realization of the handicap. But these have become unconsciously enjoyable: The person involved enjoys the ease of their performance, the thrill which comes from their mechanical or automatic release. It cannot be said that such people enjoy the *content* of such habits. *What* they do is not enjoyable; but the manner of performance is. As a result, they never break the habit.

But in the case of deliberately performing a habit in order to eliminate it, the subject is bringing it out of the unconscious and thus taking away the pleasure that comes from its automatic release. What is left tends by practice to become so distasteful that it tends to eliminate itself. It is the old biological law of avoidance of pain.

IV. THE SEGMENTAL METHOD

We do not yet know just how many habits can be eliminated by deliberately performing them. In some cases the method is impractical. We cannot deliberately initiate anger, irritability, hatred, scorn, despair, fear, and other emotions. It is also a question whether we can deliberately resort to criticism, to sternness, to stubbornness, to gossiping, to unfriendliness, to pessimism, to any kind of bad habitual moods, to argumentativeness, to carelessness. When deliberately performed, there is something artificial about them. They are merely assumed, like the states of mind of the actor, and are not real, although it is possible that they could become real. This sometimes happens on the stage, even though most stage parts are not felt as real. In addition, it is doubtful whether any of them could be made so incidental that the conditioned-reflex method could be applied.

Hence, other methods of habit-breaking have to be offered for trial to meet these further demands. Two more will be proposed: The first is the segmental method, which is discussed here; the second, the attraction method, will be discussed in a following chapter.

As we have previously noted, it is impossible to form a new habit merely by going through the process of learning. A habit comes only *after* it is learned. Yet it is traditional that many people try to perform the new act just as it is to be. They attempt the *whole* of it, with the result that they become easily discouraged by failure. Their reach far exceeds their grasp. The nerves and muscles of the body are not yet ready for the new act, at least in its entirety. A man cannot be cordial all at once if he has an opposite habit of sourness. He cannot be optimistic all at once if pessimism is one of his chief characteristics.

In learning a new skill in a machine shop, the beginner goes at it gradually. Should a different method be followed in learning a nonmuscular habit? Habits of the mind or disposition are formed in the same way as habits of the body.

We are, therefore, proposing the method of working into a new habit piece by piece. By means of both the conditioned reflex and the negative method, the old habit, rather than the substitute or new act, is practiced. The third method is thus quite different from the first two.

It would be very difficult to maintain the whole of the newly proposed act even if the whole act could be fully performed. The newly made act would not be strong enough to withstand the pullings of the old habit, being too young and weak. A new pathway in the nervous system is very tender, as it were, and may be obliterated at any time by a strong enemy. A newly made path in the forest is easily overgrown by weeds because of the new earth; it is not hardened enough to withstand the weeds. A new act cannot compete with an old act until it is as strong or stronger. Nature works in the line of least resistance, and our behavior is going to follow the old paths until new ones are real competitors.

It is necessary then to build up the strength of a new act, and since habit is built up gradually step by step by the trial-and-error method, we could strengthen the new act by rooting in one section at a time before a new segment is undertaken. Some success has been secured among students in the writer's classroom by the segmental method with such characteristics as carping criticism, pessimism, and carelessness.

The first step is to break the habit-making into sections that properly fit into one another, and that allow a gradual but a continual strengthening of the new act. In respect to developing praise-giving, for instance, in place of carping criticism, the following technique was applied:

(1) The subject was to praise someone or something once a day for one month.

(2) The subject was to do the same thing twice a day for a second month.

(3) The subject was to do the same thing three times a day for a third month.

(4) The remarks were to be made to neutral people, or about situations that did not concern the subject very much, during the first two months; in the third month one of the praise-giving remarks was to be to a friend, and the other two to enemies.

Two principles of vital importance were thus emphasized. In the first place, we proceeded step by step so that what was done was done slowly and carefully, and given time to become fixed and strong. Saying one word of praise once a day for a month should enable such a practice to become pretty well habitual. In the second place, we proposed a series of steps which progressively grew more difficult. To praise at first a neutral situation or person is not difficult; to praise an enemy is difficult, so it came only at the end of the training period.

Some students overcame this kind of habit in less than three months, whereas others were not successful in the three months' trial. If the time had been extended for the latter group, the preliminary steps would have probably been strengthened.

These two principles were applied in an attempt to overcome a pessimistic attitude. The same method was used. During the first two months optimistic remarks were made about neutral conditions, but three remarks a day during the third month were about work, financial conditions, or that which easily occasions a bad mood.

The students trying out this method progressed very well against their pessimism after three months, and then the new habit of its own strength developed itself without further conscious practice.

To overcome carelessness, it was suggested that a person work to overcome just one careless item in the day's program, and then after this to add another, and so forth, until the new habit was applied to almost all situations.

A little success has been attained by applying the segmental method to emotions such as irritability and anger.

But it is a difficult task, because emotions are so strong that it is not easy to interject controlling bits of behavior. In fact, some authorities think that it is impossible to subdue an emotion when it is under way because of its monopolizing seizure of the body, and that the only recourse is to let it die of its own accord.

Still, emotions should be subject to the application of the segmental method. It is not theoretically impossible to throw into an emotional spasm a contrary kind of behavior which should very much weaken the spasm and, after a long practice period, control it entirely. James's[5] statement that we whistle to keep up our courage is no figure of speech; his statements that if we wish to conquer emotions we must cold-bloodedly adopt the outward movements of contrary behavior, that depression can be lifted by the smoothing out of the brow, brightening the eye, speaking in a major key—these are plausible deductions from his theory of emotions, namely, that emotions are basically bodily disturbances, and that a contrary assumption of behavior should successfully compete for supremacy. If an assumption of a smile can drive away a bad mood, an assumption of patience and cordiality should drive away irritability and anger.

But it is easier to assume the contrary behavior in piecemeal fashion. Throwing in a contrary type of behavior of the entire body when an undesirable emotion is at its height is next to impossible. Yet many people attempt it with little or no success, and inevitably they are discouraged.

A few students have much weakened a habit of irritability by saying, "I am sorry," and continuing this practice for a month. During the next month they also assume a smile when irritated. After this two months' period, the control developed in some cases was strong enough to kill all of the emotion.

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[5] James, William, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), Vol. II, p. 463.

Anger also was weakened by a series of successive interjections in the angry behavior; the subject had to practice such contrary bits of conduct as whistling, making a remark about the political news of the day, or humming a tune. Counting ten as an anger control is no figure of speech, but it may be just a segment of contrary behavior, and should be followed by a progressive series of other steps until the added strength of the combined steps is strong enough to make the subject control his anger.

Such a progressive-series method is right in line with the theory of learning, for building a new habit *is* learning. The means to establish a new act are a series of trial-and-error steps. Every learning process is just a piecemeal procedure, as we have previously indicated, making the learning a very different thing from what is learned. To apply the segmental method to overcoming an emotion is, therefore, following a sound principle.

The question may be asked whether one should try to control his carping criticism, pessimism, carelessness, irritability, and anger outside of the practice part of the day. The best attitude to adopt is to let nature take its course, and if a person is easily inclined to drift into the old habit in non-practice periods, let him drift. The subject is not at first trying to control the *whole* day in respect to these bad habits but only a small fraction of it. It is too arduous, it is even impossible to be one hundred per cent successful for a whole day during the training time. In addition the effort to avoid repeating the fault would only tend to fix it more deeply. The trying would fail in its purpose.

The segmental method is not recommended as a panacea for forming all kinds of habits, but it has appeared to be useful in some cases.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What difficulties may be experienced in applying the principle of the conditioned reflex to overcoming habit?

2. Can you name some dislikes, fears, or prejudices in your

life which have been created by means of the conditioned reflex?

3. Can you propose a conditioned-reflex setup to overcome one of your dislikes, fears, or prejudices?

4. Is the negative method of breaking a habit as strange as it sounds?

5. Can you recite a trial of the negative method in your personal experience?

6. Why is the segmental method in line with the theory of learning?

7. Why are habits difficult to overcome?

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III

FATIGUE

He tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes;
with eager feeding food doth choke the feeder.
SHAKESPEARE

I. THE PROBLEM

A. Fatigue, A Recent Study

It is strange that after many thousands of years of human existence fatigue is just beginning to receive careful study. People have merely taken it for granted as one of the inescapable burdens of life and have thought and done very little about it. Human existence with little or no fatigue was well-nigh inconceivable. To be very tired was thought to be natural.

But the human factor is receiving at last close attention. Man has been studied from many angles, but mostly in relation to certain aspects of environment, or to certain far-reaching aspects of the universe. Man *himself* has been very little scrutinized. It remained for psychology to realize the saying of Pope, "The proper study of mankind is man." "Know thyself" has at last received its proper emphasis, and many habits of the mind are now investigated with the zeal attending the study of the contents of a test tube, or the marvels of an invention. Just as many instincts have gone by the board, just so many other misconceptions about the human mind are disappearing.

Fatigue is a part of this present, human scientific interest, and inquiring minds are asking whether the bad effects of fatigue are necessary; whether fatigue can be eliminated or lessened; whether the human mind can increase its efficiency by freeing itself from the load of fatigue. Is heavy fatigue a weakness of the mind, or a poor manner of living due to ignorance? Animals do not get as tired as human beings. Is there something wrong in our manner of living and working? Biology says that every bodily organ is supplied with a superabundance of cells and, therefore, a superabundance of energy. We are thus provided with a reserve of energy for the work of the day. Is then exhaustive fatigue natural? Should the highest product of evolution be constantly afflicted with the blighting effects of fatigue?

The first studies of fatigue were made for commercial reasons—to ascertain the production of the maximum output of the highest quality in the shortest time *with the least expenditure of energy* and with the maximum satisfaction. What we have scientifically discovered about fatigue—not as much as we expected up to date—has been done under the pay of industry and in behalf of workers. Better working conditions, a better method of handling tools and machines, better morale, the introduction of rest periods at appropriate places, the shortening of the day—all have tended to lessen fatigue and make the human factor in the office and shop more efficient.

But this commercial study of fatigue is going to have far-reaching effects on the general public. Gilbreth[1] says that fatigue in America costs twenty cents daily per worker. The annual loss in the United States from fatigue has been roughly estimated by Newman[2] as $2,500,000,000. When billions of dollars are spent annually, when thousands of injuries are incurred annually, when scores are killed in industry annually, because of fatigue, the general public is sooner or later going to realize that burdensome fatigue is as unnecessary to people in any walk and way of life as a disease. It will be regarded as just another one of those things which the public has tolerated without justification.

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[1] Gilbreth, F. B., and L. M., "Unnecessary Fatigue, a Multi-Billion Enemy to America," *Journal of Industrial Hygiene*, 2: 542–545 (1920).

[2] Newman, B. J., "Shop Standards and Fatigue," *National Safety News*, Nov. 29, 1920.

When also the mental wastage because of fatigue is calculated, it will be not only the industrialist but also the layman who will make it a problem to be tackled. In the study of mental hygiene it is readily seen that fatigue produces mental inefficiency, restlessness, discouragement, despair, and unhappiness. To lessen fatigue by a mere fraction would better human living. In future years it is probable that an individual will know how to make such inroads into the ill effects of fatigue that it will be unusual to get very tired. In fact, a person may come to feel ashamed of getting very fatigued because it will indicate a poor functioning of the mind.

B. Fatigue, A Moral Violation

Pronounced fatigue may even become a moral problem, and, therefore, something far removed from the idea of being something necessary to the business of living. It may in a course of time be looked upon as a disgrace, just as disloyalty or dishonesty is. Experimentalists have already pointed out an analogy between behavior in extreme fatigue and alcoholic intoxication and asphyxiation. It is injurious to get extremely tired just as it is to become intoxicated. This analogy is very strange to the layman, and even to many scientists, but when we see the unnecessary injury to the mind and body when one is weighted down with fatigue, the analogy may not appear far fetched.

C. A Little Fatigue Necessary

The reader will readily see that we are talking about exhaustive fatigue, for this is the kind that injures the nervous system, lowers the quality of performance, and takes the zest out of life for creativeness and enthusiasm. An ordinary or mild form of fatigue is natural and inevitable, and even mildly beneficial. The body's metabolism indicates a law, namely, that bodily tissue must tear down as well as build up. Thus, exercise in its very nature entails a certain degree of fatigue. When active muscular work is just beginning, a test of the blood shows a disturbance of equilibrium with a decrease in oxygen supply and an increase in carbon dioxide. But as work proceeds, there is a change in the opposite direction when the body adjusts itself to its labors. Then the blood shows an excess of oxygen, and a decrease in carbon dioxide. This is the end of the "warming-up" period. We know that work efficiency is low in the first, fresh hours of the morning (this corresponds to an initial fatigue), but increases as the day passes. It seems that this early fatigue acts like a spur to whip the body into its best production. Johnson[3] makes the point that a man should become moderately tired in order to do his best. This condition is undoubtedly due not to a greater creation of energy but to its redistribution on account of this extra spur to the body. When a person is a little tired, he drives his car better than when in the first fresh condition. Distractions easily take place in the latter case, and as the driver's attention is drawn to a sideline, energy is drained away. But as he becomes a little tired, he becomes less distractible. Scenery on the side does not attract him. Conversation ceases. In fact, an attempt at conversation may easily set up an irritation. So set is the energy for driving, and for this alone, that an attempt by another to interfere with its direction may arouse strong irritation. Fatigue appears to set up inhibitions for side activities. This is the case with every task as a person proceeds with it. Here we see even an advantage of a mild form of fatigue. It makes for better concentration.

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[3] Johnson, H. M., "The Real Meaning of Fatigue," *Harper's Magazine*, 144: 1–18 (1929).

Perhaps Titchener's[4] statement that it is possible to study better with a little effort is related to the interesting phenomenon that performance is better when the subject becomes moderately tired.

But if mild fatigue may be helpful, extreme fatigue has the opposite effect.

D. *What Is Fatigue?*

Nobody knows exactly what fatigue is. There are two groups of theories—the chemical and the neural. The most reliable and prominent theory of the cause of fatigue is that it is due to a toxin in the muscles which contains glycogen, a starchy substance convertible into sugar. But in this conversion a waste product, lactic acid, is generated. Part of the waste product is also carbon dioxide and kenotoxin. If there is plenty of oxygen supplied to the muscles, this lactic acid is reconvertible into sugar. But if muscle activity is prolonged, the waste substance far outweighs the glycogen, and this fact is said to be the cause of fatigue. There is, hence, local fatigue in the part exercised, but since the blood and lymph systems carry this waste product through the entire body, affecting both the nerves and muscles, we have also general as well as local fatigue. This accounts for the fact that a person feels tired all over even though he has been exercising only a single portion of the body. We can't work with one part of the body and expect to keep the other parts rested. Inject the blood of a tired animal into a rested animal and the latter will show symptoms of fatigue all over.

Some scientists think that it is not the waste substance in the muscles that causes fatigue, but simply the depletion of the glycogen in the muscles, just as a battery of an automobile runs down with a depletion of its current.

Some authorities are of the opinion that fatigue is not muscular at all, but entirely neural. It is, they say, all a matter of nerves. If a muscle seems to be exhausted, it can be stimulated to work when the motor nerve is severed. Fatigue may be a matter of the motor end-plate of the nerves that are connected to the muscles. Johnson says that this connection may become fouled.

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[4] Titchener, E. B., *A Textbook of Psychology* (1919), p. 295.

Other authorities think that fatigue is due to the befogging of the general synaptic connections, while one group believes that it is all a matter of the shrinkage of the nucleus in the cell body of the nerve.

Other students of fatigue think that even mental fatigue is muscular, because thinking is not merely done in "thin air," and has more than a brain behind it. Probably this is true. Contrary to popular thought, a great many muscles are involved in thinking. Merely to think of a horse race or a football game sets the muscles taut and tense. Merely to imagine the Washington Monument is to say it to oneself with vocal muscles or raise the eyes as if looking up to it. Jacobson,[5] in his studies of relaxation, couples thinking and all mental states with muscles; he says that the quieting of muscles will also quiet the mind. The only difference, it is said, between mental and muscular fatigue is the difference in the kind of muscles employed. The former uses a finer and more diffused set, whereas the latter uses the gross and heavy muscles. So mental fatigue, commonly thought to be only neural, may be muscular. This may explain why persons mentally fatigued have found it very tiring to offset their mental weariness by bodily exercise.

Then the question is often raised whether most of fatigue is not just boredom or ennui—mere lack of interest. In this case a man is said to be tired *of* work instead of tired *by* work.

But these conflicting theories do not obviate the practical problem of fatigue. When an observer watches workmen pour out of a factory gate at the end of the day, he cannot tell whether the weary face in the crowd is muscularly tired, mentally tired, or just bored. All tired people look alike no matter what their work has been. And we shall show later that even suggestion produces the weariness and discouragement that mental or muscular work produces. For practical purposes it does not matter whether fatigue is mental, muscular, boredom, suggestion, or even monotony; the effect appears to be the same—there is a lowering of efficiency and weariness. From the point of view of mental hygiene it is justifiable to try to eliminate the causes of heavy fatigue even if it cannot be defined.

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[5] Jacobson, E., *Progressive Relaxation* (1929).

II. OCCASIONS FOR FATIGUE

A. Lack of Economy of Movements

A very common and effective occasion for fatigue is a poor way of working. The hit-and-miss, haphazard manner of doing jobs results in the expenditure of a great amount of unnecessary energy by the use of many unnecessary nerves and muscles. The complete lack of a definite schedule for work has resulted in a heavy toll of fatigue. Machines have been made to function with an almost perfect mechanical precision, but the human being gives little or no attention to the proper distribution of his energy.

An economy of movements has been the aim of industry in order to speed up production, and also to reduce fatigue. Frederick W. Taylor[6] inaugurated a new study in the Bethlehem Steel Company plant in 1915 when he trained laborers to lift a bar of pig iron weighing 92 pounds in the most economical manner; then he reduced working periods by introducing rest periods. As a result production jumped from 12½ tons per man daily to 47½ tons, with each workman under load only 42 per cent of the time. Thus, he not only introduced a new method to increase production, but reduced fatigue and thereby improved the human factor. F. B. Gilbreth[7] discovered that it made quite a difference in output as to how a man moved his left arm in working a drill press; and he also discovered that the economy of motion was a means of staying off fatigue. Under scientific management, a workman today can be made almost as efficient in his manner of working as a machine.

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[6] Taylor, F. W., *Principles of Scientific Management* (1915).

But most individuals are not under a scientific management that determines the most economical output. The woman in the home, the man in the office, the teacher in the classroom, the businessman behind his desk, the salesman, the builder, and numerous other types of workers are still unscientific and wasteful in their methods of work.

In the daily life of most people there are two difficulties that unnecessarily and rapidly promote fatigue and add to the burden of living:

In the first place, few individuals plan their work in such a way that they know in the early morning the various requirements for their energy during the day. Activities are not considered with respect to the energy they will consume. The businessman may pour out as much energy in the first hour of the day over little routine, perfunctory matters as he will to execute a serious and important contract with a fellow executive. The housewife may display as much energy in little details of the home as in other very important functions. A teacher who fritters away her energy on unimportant activities may be too weary to hold a conference with a student over a personality problem, the solution of which may determine his life's happiness. People are draining so much of their energy in little things that they have very little left for the significant things. Nature uses just the proper amount of energy to push a seed out of the ground, but man is a wastrel in respect to his energy.

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[7] Gilbreth, F. B., *Applied Motion Study* (1919), p. 90.

With this indiscriminate expenditure, there is also a disproportion of time allowed for the various items of the day. Many of the great values of life have been neglected for lack of time. Important scheduled problems in an individual's life have been sidetracked because fatigue has thrown up a wall which bids the individual to neglect them.

Moreover, with this indiscriminate expenditure of energy there is little in reserve for the unexpected situations that are bound to arise during the day. We foolishly sap our strength for the regularly scheduled events and have little left for the unexpected. The unnecessarily tired housewife has an inward reluctance when greeting company that has just "dropped in"; the tired business executive is impatient when regular business must be sidetracked and a new item introduced. We live like tired animals, unable to meet the new demands of the day buoyantly and restfully.

In the second place, unnecessary fatigue is caused by poor shifts from one kind of work to another. We do not provide a schedule in such a way that we become warmed up sufficiently to a task before passing to another with the least amount of friction. The student may quickly jump from the study of natural science to that of social science, and keep on alternating these two different kinds of studies throughout the evening. The carpenter may quickly jump through twelve very different jobs that constitute the making of a building. The man in the office may just barely begin to feel the warmth of being buried in a report when he suddenly shifts to holding a conference. Experiments in industry indicate that it is bad to make a too rapid transition from task to task. If a carpenter is making a table, it is better for him to do all the planing first, next the fitting of the pieces together, and then all the finishing work, instead of planing one piece, then fitting, and next finishing it. The nervous system does not become accustomed to too rapid shifts from task to task. It demands a warming-up period before going into another type of work. This allowance grants us better production and also a reduced fatigue. In this day of machine-gun-like impressions, shooting themselves at us with a bewildering speed, when people are being pulled too rapidly from one task to another, it is not strange that this pull on the nervous system brings nature's punishment in the way of a heavy dose of fatigue.

One of the first experiments to test the effect of the relative value of many and few shifts of work was made by A. J. Culler,[8] who had four groups of persons sort a package of eighty cards into a box pigeonholed from one to ten in four different ways. Group I sorted eight times a day for six days, using just one number code; group II sorted sixteen times a day for six days, but with each sorting changed the number code; group III sorted sixteen times a day for six days, changing the number code for every four sortings; group IV sorted sixteen times a day for six days, changing the number code every eight sortings.

The results indicated that the groups which alternated in work methods always lagged behind the group which did not alternate, and this was the case throughout the whole stretch of six days. Training and practice did not change the relative difference between the groups.

However, the impression must not be left that the same kind of a task should be prolonged without a change. We would then have the item of fatigue or monotony. Culler makes the point that in the long run certain large shifts are beneficial. For instance, it was group IV with only one shift a day after the eighth sorting that made the greatest progress on the sixth day. The average time for sorting the pack with the first code on the sixth day was 60 seconds for group I, 69.4 seconds for group II, 67.4 seconds for group III, and 58.4 seconds for group IV.

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[8] Culler, A. J., "Interference and Adaptability," *Archives of Psychology*, 24 (1912).

Nature apparently allows for large shifts, but frowns upon abrupt shifts which lessen efficiency and, as we know, bring on fatigue. Thorndike[9] explains the law of readiness by saying that the mind can do its best work when it is prepared for it, and the law of unreadiness by saying that the mind does not do its best work when it is not prepared for it. These two principles are very much neglected in the unprepared shifting from one task to another.

B. *Emotion and Fatigue*

The brightest individual in the office or home, or the most skillful workman in the shop, will feel the ravages of fatigue if he is continually stirred by emotion. Witness the wearying effect upon those whose day has been spent in worry, irritability, or anger—probably the most toll-exacting emotions affecting human nature. Many a person whose day has been caught in the meshes of worry feels a weary lassitude that forces him to sleep. Those whose day has been repeatedly upset by distractions occasioning provocation wonder why their strength is so weak long before the day is over. Almost anyone can testify to the debilitative effects of anger.

Persons whose life is perpetual discouragement and disappointment are burdened with an additional pall of fatigue which smothers ambition.

We could mention sorrow, grief, and despair as very debilitating, but these are only very occasional experiences. While very severe, they come so seldom that there is no permanent ill effect. It is the day-by-day emotions of individuals that tire them out, especially if they are of the negative sort.

It is no wonder that emotions are fatiguing. We have found that workmen in the shop and factory bring on much unnecessary fatigue because of wasteful movements and an uneconomical expenditure of energy. In emotions, we find this condition in a very marked degree. Note the tremendous activity of a person who is worried, irritable, or angry, for instance. He goes out of the normal into the abnormal in respect to movement. The worried individual is as restless as a wind-swept sea. He paces back and forth in his room, and is taut and tense while sitting in a chair. The irritated person is racing the nerves and muscles of his entire body, sizzling in every portion of his anatomy. The angry individual has all his muscles bristling with activity. People who have yielded to these emotions have shifted their muscles into high gear. They have commandeered their reserve resources and often have turned on the full power. Just from the point of view of sheer activity, it is no wonder that persons who give free rein to these negative emotions pay a penalty of constant fatigue because of their folly.

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[9] Thorndike, E. L., *Educational Psychology* (1913), Vol. I.

We also know that an emotion is the poorest expression of energy that we can name. In fact, every emotion, even such a positive sort as love and happy excitement, is a disrupted and disjointed action. Some psychologists[10] classify emotions under action because they appear to be actions that have gone wrong, that have become completely disorganized. Who knows what to do when worried? Who knows what to do when irritable? Who knows what to do when angry? Something is done—and plenty—but there is no head behind it, no control. Every emotion is a predicament—suggesting that something be done, but nothing in the way of an organized expression of the self.

Energy, consequently, is turned into many different directions in every emotion. A person caught in worry, irritability, or anger–and, in fact, in all emotions

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[10] Bentley, M., *The Field of Psychology* (1924), Chap. XIII.

—is spending his bodily energies in a spree. Naturally the wastage is tremendous. An emotion is like a storm in the body where energy is expended haphazardly.

We know that the neural basis for this disorganized and wasteful expression of energy lies in the automatic nervous system. In the normal functioning of the brain and body, the divisions of the automatic system work in harmonious union. The cranial, the sympathetic, and the sacral coöperate in furthering the welfare of the body. But in an emotion the sympathetic division breaks out beyond bounds and upsets the entire nerve structure; it sets up a rebellion against the cranial and the sacral. The latter are inhibited in their normal functioning. The heart, for instance, is beating normally when a person is not under an emotion, but the sympathetic nervous system in an emotion very much disturbs the function of the heart. From a biological consideration, an emotion is a civil war in the nerves of the body, and, as these connect with muscles, we naturally expect a confusion of muscle movement in every emotion.

Then too, the adrenin from the adrenal glands above the kidneys cause a high-keyed condition of the body. The whole of the alimentary canal is unfavorably affected. The stomach is often fully put out of commission; blood and energy are drawn from it and sent to the central nervous system—to the lungs, heart, and skeletal muscles mostly concerned in trying to get out of an emergency. Adrenal stimulation throws the body out of equilibrium.

Is it any wonder that when emotions break into the normal functioning of the nerves and muscles, and the body is thrown into a strained, tense, opposed, divisional activity, emotions should tire people?

It has been discovered that persons under emotion have a very high stimulation from the adrenal glands and receive extra doses of strength. It is known that persons under emotion have performed marvelous feats of strength. How then do we tire from emotions? It is true that the body is stimulated under emotion to carry blood with a greater supply of oxygen to wash out the accumulation of waste matter in the muscles, which causes fatigue, and to keep them in clean, fighting trim. But, as Cannon[11] suggests, the emotional provisions for keeping the body at high efficiency may not continue to work. Then, in spite of this extra stimulation in emotion, we all know the after-effects—fatigue. People do not tire *in* emotion but they tire *from* emotion. If human efficiency is to be raised, fatigue must be lowered by emotions themselves being controlled.

C. *Prolonged Work*

The rushed businessman is already tired enough at the end of the day to quit the office, but he has an extra bit of work which "must be done" before he leaves. The housewife has a task which "simply won't wait over until tomorrow"—although she is weary enough to relax. A writer is trying to complete an article, but he is so tired that his brain is confused and his head aches; yet he has planned a certain amount of work for the day and is determined to carry it out.

How costly is it to push oneself during the last few minutes or hours of a task when one is too fatigued to feel an urge to work? Is it just a matter of a little will power—a little exertion or determination to "make the last stretch"?

So costly is it when we go beyond ordinary fatigue to finish a task that the extra work done is not nearly worth the cost. Something very disturbing takes place in the nervous system when a man pushes himself beyond a moderate fatigue point.

The classical experiment in this regard was performed by Mosso, the Italian physiologist. He had his subjects lift the weight of an ergograph by means of a finger stirrup until they were exhausted. This condition required thirty lifts. As can be seen in Figure 7, two hours were required for a complete recovery from this total exhaustion; but when the lifts were only fifteen in number, and the fatigue was only moderate, the time required for recuperation was one-half hour, or one fourth of the time for thirty lifts. It *took three times* as long to recover from the *last* fifteen lifts as from the *first* fifteen. And it was found that the *last three* lifts cost as much in time of recovery as the first fifteen. At least two important deductions can be made:

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[11] Cannon, W. B., *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage* (1915), p. 205.

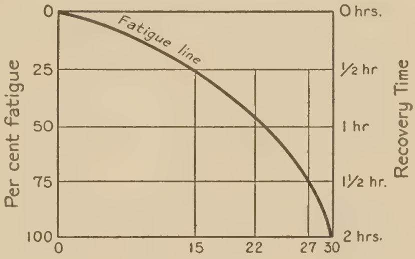

Figure 7.

(1) It requires *three times* as much rest for the same amount of work when a man is *very tired* as it does when he is *ordinarily tired*. There is only an *arithmetical* increase in work when the subject is very tired, but he needs a *geometrical* increase in rest to recover. He may do a little more work when very tired, but he must rest as if he did three times as much.

(2) The very end of a very tiring piece of work may require as much rest as the whole of the work required from which one gets only ordinarily tired.

It may be said that this is an artificial experiment and does not represent the everyday life of an individual, but the work curve for a finger, according to one experiment,[12] is the same as the work curve for a foot, shoulder, arm, or for any other part of the body that may be put to work. Considering that work in the office, home, or shop is different from the work tested by the ergograph in engaging different parts of the body, we can rightly conclude, nevertheless, that such work curves would show the same results and requirements as we find with the ergograph. Of course, we seldom reach the point of 100 per cent exhaustion, as in the experiments cited, but we often get nearly exhausted, and the same principle would apply even though we would have to lower our figures a little.

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[12] Unpublished work of S. C. Yochelson, Yale University.

We see the pure waste and folly in pushing work beyond a moderate fatigue point. Nothing is saved, and the loss is great. Evidently, gritting the teeth in the zealous determination to finish a job, no matter how tired, does not pay. The work may be finished, but so is the nervous system, and the latter demands a tremendously heavy pay for this extra spur because of the great inroad into its metabolic equilibrium.

If everyone could stop and rest when moderately tired, he could always do more work before the end of the day than he could by driving relentlessly ahead to the end when very tired. Nature appears to demand that to produce the maximum load of work, man must stop work—another of nature's paradoxes. The introduction of the rest period in industry has resulted, as we have seen, in a lessening of the working time, but an increase in production.

In the home and office more work can also be produced by appropriate rest periods. The rushed business executive thinks he does not have time for golf, but the paradox is that he would actually have more time if he reckoned time by amount of production. The public is speed-crazed today by the near mania of working at a terrible pace. It is efficiency-mad, and the mind is constantly keyed up. But efficiency can be heightened by breaking up this constantly keyed-up condition. Nature if left alone does not relentlessly work. There is in nature the rhythm of a wave, which has its incline and decline. When we violate this principle during the work period, we do less work and suffer more. Excitement or constant tension does not mean efficiency. It is not surprising to find that the leisurely Englishman who stops work for tea and has other relaxing moments during the day usually accomplishes more than the constantly excited American. When work is a fetish, it contradicts itself, as though nature were trying to warn us to stop.

In the ergograph experiment, the modification of quality of work as the subject went beyond the moderate fatigue point was not emphasized, but we know from experience that work deteriorates when the worker is very tired. He misses more keys on the typewriter, makes more mistakes in figures, becomes a slower thinker, is less able to plan, and is less skillful in a manual job when he is exhausted than when he is moderately fatigued. He wastes *quality and time* by pushing the human organism beyond the safety point of fatigue. What is gained by going beyond this safety point? Not a whit!

The day should be, therefore, interspersed with small rest periods, just as industry is today, to insure the maximum production of the best quality at least cost. Industry has experimented for a long time as to the proper length of these rest periods, and when they should be introduced. If too long, they are harmful, for the body becomes too inert, or too much time is lost in warming up. If too short, they irritate.

Shepherd[13] maintains that the time in rest should be approximately 16.6 per cent of the time spent during working hours, and says that this is practically the same as the proportion of rest to marching time of the United States Infantry. Amar[14] discovered the same percentage experimenting with workers in brass, and Gilbreth also found this proportion to be the best in his experiment with handkerchief folders. We can deduce from these figures that about one sixth of the total working period should be spent in rest with, of course, additional time off for lunch. Just when these pauses should come depends on the kind of work being done; there is no uniform place for them. Each and every kind of work must have its rest pauses experimentally worked out, but on the basis of the principle of about one sixth of the total working time.

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[13] Shepherd, G. H., "Effect of Rest Periods on Production," *Personnel Journal*, 7: 186–202 (1928).

[14] Cited by G. H. Shepherd, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

At some tasks it is well to stop frequently and for very short periods; for others the actual work-stretch could be extended with no greater length of rest pause. The best guiding principle[15] as to where the rest pause should be introduced is that it should come just when production is beginning to fall, and the length of it should not eliminate the warmed-up effect of work, or interfere with it.

This guide is comparatively reliable in a shop where production can be accurately measured, but it is difficult to apply to a teacher in the classroom, or to a newspaper editor behind his desk. How can the latter determine when production is falling off, if any at all? Every individual should experiment with his own daily schedule and try to work out his own rest pauses. If the daily schedule will not allow the best kinds of rest, such as that of a physician subject to change at any and all times, everyone should endeavor to keep a schedule of rest pauses that might nearly approximate the ideal arrangement. Efficiency of mind and production, whether in the house or office, in the store or in the shop, requires that the work period be limbered up with a rhythm of rest pauses.

But we find that even though the cost in time and energy is tremendous for the recovery from a piece of work performed when very tired or virtually exhausted, people as a rule do not give themselves sufficient rest after such situations. They generally stick to their usual habits of rest and let it go at that.

The man who goes to bed nearly exhausted from his work often sleeps only his customary length of time. The weary woman burdened by an especially heavy working day will often follow her same rounds of activity and pleasures in the evening; because she has to be at the office or factory in the morning at a certain hour she does not get extra rest. But many who have the freedom for this extra time to recuperate do not avail themselves of it.

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[15] Viteles, Morris, *Industrial Psychology* (1932), p. 479.

The usual effect of overfatigue is to start in the next day in an unrestful condition, subject to irritability, anger, nervousness, and to a greater number of mistakes. The day is put through on "nerves," and then the person may not be in good shape for the second day. If this pace continues, the individual becomes nervously unstable. Many people need just rest, as Weir Mitchell advocated very strongly.

D. *The Poorly Executed Act*

Very much of the unnecessary fatigue that burdens the individual is due to a half-skillful or bungling way of carrying out activities.

When the experimentalist[16] in industry discovers that it is poor efficiency to execute a left-arm movement of a drill as shown in Figure 8, it is poor efficiency to execute any movement in an awkward manner, whether it is washing dishes, delivering a speech, writing an article, selling automobiles, or engaging in making a friend. When the awkward left-arm movement is changed to the smooth movement indicated in Figure 9, a greater efficiency in production results. But there is also a greater efficiency in the expenditure of energy, and thus necessarily a reduction of fatigue.

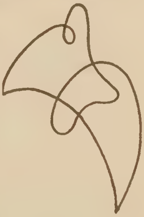

Figure 8.

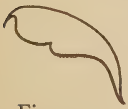

Figure 9.

An awkward manner of expression causes lack of nerve and muscle coördination, thus setting up friction and strain, which are conducive to fatigue. If an emotion is a riot of energy, every awkward expression of an individual is a small degree of such a riot.

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[16] Gilbreth, F. B., *op. cit.*, p. 90.

Energy seeking expression in such a manner would naturally be a burden to the human organism.

Many of the fatigued and weary-minded individuals who come to physicians and psychologists for treatment are "hung up" in their manner of living. They do not do anything *well.* Their activities are in the half-formed stage, and are carried out with much effort. While a great deal of this "half-baked" activity is due to doubt, indecision, worry, and lack of objectives, much of it is due to bad training. And it is then no more than an awkward bodily habit. A remedy would be to cut down the day's program to a few simple activities that can be done well.

Aristotle, being a psychologist as well as a philosopher, has emphasized the need of easy activity as a mark of a pleasurably working mind. He writes in the Seventh Book of his *Ethics:*

> Perhaps it even follows, since each state may have active working unimpeded, whether the active workings of all be happiness or that of some one of them, that this active working if it be unimpeded, must be choiceworthy; now pleasure is exactly this.

Pleasure, as here indicated, is for Aristotle not a mere pastime to accompany the hours of entertainment of an evening, but a sign of a well-performed act. And happiness itself, or a permanent feeling of pleasure, is a sign of coördinated activities working in perfect harmony. Pleasure is not to be looked upon askance as it was by many of the Puritans but as a sign of the mind of man doing its job in an efficient manner. No human being is living properly, according to Aristotle, who cannot point to his own skillfully and efficiently performed activities. His famous formula of the golden mean, an act well balanced by being between extremes, is the way of finding this free and correct activity.

Awkward movements are hence far from pleasurable. They feel very disagreeable, and easily carry with them a fatigue which is unnecessary and avoidable.

When Cabot wrote his book *What Men Live By*, he emphasized the point that an individual should do at least *one thing* 100 per cent efficiently. This gives the individual one activity from which to derive much pleasure and an ease of functioning which reduces fatigue.

Many people, because of a hurried training in this or that endeavor, or a poor start in activities of childhood, or ignorance as to the best way of doing a thing, are constantly spending the day in expressing themselves in acts that are at best only mediocre. Skill is ease, and ease eliminates or prevents fatigue. Such individuals tire long before they should, and incidentally accomplish far less than an individual whose activities are performed well. They find the very business of living very tiring instead of a joy. Their minds need to be straightened out, and this is done by straightening out their activities and ridding them of effort and strain. Even men in high positions find their strength depleted, and often their health seriously damaged, not because they have too much to do but because of the manner in which they do it.

The strain and effort in expressing oneself was thought to be the necessary lot of every human being. It was supposed to be the punishment for being a human being. Now we are beginning to think that effort is a sign that a person is not a genuine human being. Effort is not a premium, but an injury to the mind.

When mental hygiene teaches people to express themselves in free activity, it will rid society of much fatigue that depresses and paralyzes.

E. Distraction and Fatigue

1. False stimulation. Much unnecessary fatigue is caused by a misunderstanding of the result of distraction upon the human organism. False teachings are being disseminated that if an individual puts himself in a certain state of mind, a distraction will not be a distraction. If he centers the idea, it is said, that he will not be bothered by an annoyance, it will not be an annoyance. Suggestion is thus offered as the panacea for distractions. Here we see that optimism is strained to the limit in warding off disturbance.

In addition, modern life with its tense and excited living is looking upon distractions as a regular part of the day and thinking that nothing much can be done about them. Students in a fraternity think they should study in a bedlam. Many office employees feel that they are not really working unless there is a hubbub of noise around them. Factory employees feel that industry is not up to par unless there is a buzzing confusion. A few investigators in industry endeavoring to eliminate distractions cannot dissipate the idea of laymen that noise or disturbance is the order of the day, and its presence or absence does not make much difference. And efficiency in business appears to be high in spite of the confusion of noise in office and shop.

Of course, what is called noise by an outsider may not be noise for the insider. It is, therefore, very difficult to say what is and what is not noise. The general conception is that anything is noise which grates on one individual; but this is erroneous, for noise is a very relative thing. Cassel and Dallenbach[17] in their research found that not all noises necessarily distract. Listening to a continuous noise of a tuning fork, one observer had a shorter reaction time in five trials than five other subjects. Johnson[18] says that we cannot maintain in general that elimination of any noise will reduce energy output, or that the increase of a noise will raise the rate of expenditure. It all depends on the *kind* of noise and the habit-system of the individual. A sound to one person may not be noise, while to another it may be.

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[17] Cassel, E. E., and Dallenbach, K. M., "The Effect of Auditory Distraction Upon the Sensory Reaction," *American Journal of Psychology*, 29: 129–143 (1918).

[18] Johnson, H. M., "Noise: A Social Problem," *Harper's Magazine*, 5 (Oct., 1929).

However, we can simplify our discussion by treating noises or disturbances which are accepted as such by all individuals.

There also appears to be a reason for the layman thinking that disturbances do not matter, for experiments indicate that a distraction may not only maintain the same production but actually increase it.

The often-quoted experiment by Morgan[19] indicated increased production when distractions were present. His subjects were required to translate letters into numbers and numbers into letters, using a code, by pressing keys on a keyboard similar to that of a typewriter. The output was measured in the time required to translate a given number of units and in the number of errors incurred. The periods were an alternation of quietness and noise. Six out of eight subjects worked faster at the end of the noise period than at the end of the quiet period, and six out of eight made slower time after the noises stopped, while the total errors in the two periods did not show a significant difference.

English studies[20] show an increase of production when distractions are present. As one part of this experiment, Vernon and Warner studied the effect of noise on arithmetic performance. The rate of work was increased 1.3 per cent by the tick of the metronome and 2.6 per cent by the ringing of an electric bell.

Morgan,[21] however, found that while six of his subjects showed a gain during the noisy period of work, the expenditure of energy was increased. The pressure on the keyboard was much more energetic in the noisy than in the quiet period. And the introduction of noise at first increased the time of performance. Morgan asked the question whether noise is a benefit if there is a marked increase in the energy curve when it is introduced.

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[19] Morgan, J. J. B., "The Overcoming of Distraction and Other Resistances," *Archives of Psychology*, 35: 84 (1916).

[20] Industrial Health Research Board, *Eleventh Annual Report* (London, 1931), pp. 62–63.

[21] Morgan, J. J. B., *loc. cit.*

Laird[22] had four typists, two men and two women, working for two hours a day in the first and fourth weeks in quiet conditions, and in the second and third weeks in noisy conditions. By means of a douglas bag, which tested the number of calories expended per minute, he found that with noise the average expenditure of energy was 71 per cent higher than during the rest period, while under quiet conditions the expenditure of energy was only 51 per cent greater than in the resting period.

Weston and Adams[23] studied the effect of noise on six operatives in a weaving shed. One week they worked exposed to noise, whereas the next week they wore noise-proof ear muffs or "ear defenders." When these ear muffs were worn, five out of the six operatives showed a slight increase in output, the average increase for the group being 1.6 per cent. An interesting feature in this experiment was that the workers preferred to wear these "ear defenders," for they gave them a greater feeling of restfulness, implying a disturbance of nerves when working under noisy conditions.

Production records that show an increase of output in noisy conditions do not say the last word in respect to the effect of distraction. Evidently when there is an increase in production, it is achieved at the cost of greater effort. The quality of output does not in itself indicate the demands made on the nerves. It is not surprising that a cessation of noise will also increase output. Laird[24] found that any reduction in complex noise brought about an increased rate of work.

There is a strange tendency in human organisms to keep up standards of output no matter whether difficulties are increasing or not. The aging workman maintains the standard of output set up in his youth for a long time before he breaks. The office employee may keep up the same speed even though the work grows heavy. Morgan[25] experimented with subjects lifting a load which increased from 2,000 to about 6,000 grains, or from 4 to 13 pounds. Each subject was asked to do his best each time. Very little extra time was spent in lifting the heavier loads; the lifting time tended to remain constant. An increase of 300 per cent in weight produced a decrease in output of only about 16 per cent.

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[22] Laird, D. A., "Experiments on the Physiological Cost of Noise," *Journal of National Institute of Industrial Psychology*, 4: 251–258 (1929).

[23] Industrial Health Research Board, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[24] Laird, D. A., "The Effects of Noise," *Journal of Acoustical Society of America*, 1: 256–262 (1930).

Just because production is maintained or even increased is no sign in itself, however, that no extra effort is necessary to keep it going. While Morgan's experiment just quoted does not deal with distraction, it does show that the constant level of production is done at the expense of extra effort of the body. So it is in respect to work done under distraction.

Production being maintained in spite of bodily discomfort is shown in an unpublished experiment by Poffenberger.[26] He employed twelve subjects to work continuously for approximately five and one-half hours at a task of completing sentences. Only one rest was allowed, and that was between the fourteenth and fifteenth units. The subjects were asked to rate their fatigue. The output curve remained about the same throughout the entire period, but fatigue was so evident that, as the author states, if the subjects had not been actually paid for their time, there would have been desertions.

Just because the housewife, the office girl, and the machinist maintain a high efficiency in spite of noise is no proof that distraction is not an injurious wear on the body because of a greater expenditure of effort. Distractions by their very nature are distractions to the physical organism.

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[25] Morgan, J. J. B., *loc. cit.*

[26] Poffenberger, A. T., *Applied Psychology* (1928), pp. 134–136.

Distractions pull attention to themselves—sense organs are primed or set to hear, see, smell, taste, and touch the distracting object. As attention is pulled to distracting objects, the muscles of the body pull in that direction. But the regular or scheduled work that is being done also attracts the opposite attention, thus entailing the use of a different set of muscles. Distractions, therefore, mean that motor systems in the body are dead set against each other. There is opposition and conflict. In this clash there is let loose a spurt of energy, just like two clashing armies releasing strength in battle. This extra expended energy may be the incentive to keep up production or to exceed it, but the organism pays heavily for it.

As outward efficiency is maintained in the face of distractions, it is very probable that inward efficiency decreases. A greater strain of the nervous system with its inevitable sign of fatigue is the penalty exacted by our age, whose focal-point is business and industrial promotion amid an avalanche of distractions. Perhaps the fact that heart trouble today leads the list of the causes of death may be attributed to this extra and injurious demand on the body as we bow to the god of efficiency. More tests will be devised, however, to measure the energy-expenditure of the individual in his rush to push business and industry to the "ideal" point. And as more attention is called to strain and fatigue, the more will they be eliminated.

The very highest efficiency in any endeavor, whether in the home, church, office, college, shop, or factory, should correspond not with a strain and stress on the nervous system resulting in premature fatigue, but with an easy and effortless functioning of the human being. Already experiments in reducing distractions caused by bad lighting and poor ventilation have increased production, not by an artificial spur to the human organism, but by reducing internal friction. The maintenance or increase of production in the midst of noise is not very significant; it merely shows that a man can walk well or faster with a pitchfork stuck in his ribs. But who wants this sort of false stimulation?

2. *Monotony—a distraction.* No subject of study in regard to distraction is more interesting than monotony. It is challenging a renewed study because it is proving to be something very different from its first conception. The general view of monotony is that it is a result of just doing nothing, a kind of drowsy, dull inactivity, a feeling of no change, or of weary quietude.

But it appears to be a very different condition. It is due to a wrong kind of activity, and, far from being a changeless condition, it is fraught with plenty of life. Monotony is essentially a distraction—a pulling of the mind in two opposite directions, a conflict.[27] Work grows monotonous because it requires attention, but is not of sufficient interest to *hold* attention. Other items, physical or mental, are also claiming attention, and, of course, they are of more interest. Surrounding objects attract the sense organs, and sensory experiences are generated in competition with the work. Or memory, imagination, or wishful thinking may carry the mind into their fields, but again in competition with the demand of the moment.

Naturally the mind is divided in monotony. Motor mechanisms are competing against each other. An individual cannot attend to his books and at the same time set up a longing to attend a movie without setting up an opposing muscular mechanism. Muscles go the way the attention goes, as we have said.

In resisting a tendency to distraction in order to keep the mind on what one is doing, fatigue sets in. Monotony, while not work-fatigue, is organismic-fatigue. It is a psychological truism that people can easily tire from monotony or from doing very little actual work. Usually, however, there is enough, and, in fact, too much activity, but of the wrong sort, within the human body.

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[27] Myers, C. S., *Mind and Work* (1920), p. 204.

It is difficult to say how monotony can be cured. Some think that only highly intelligent people experience monotony and that only the dullard should be put on repetitive work; others think it is a matter of high-strung nerves or temperament irrespective of the intelligence quotient of the individual. Münsterberg[28] says that people may be divided into two classes: those who cannot endure repetition and those who can. If this is true, and much evidence bears it out, then monotony is an individual matter.

Winkler[29] speaks of three types of people working at a task: (1) those who find the work entirely automatic and can put their minds on anything without strain and monotony; (2) those who put their whole attention on the job and have no monotony; and (3) those whose uniform work does not require full attention and who *divide* it, with the consequent onset of monotony. To prevent monotony, an individual should engage in activity so changeable that it offers the full attraction of his attention.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How prevalent is the thought that human beings should get very tired?
2. How slipshod is the daily energy-schedule of the average individual?
3. Why have we studied the fatigue problem only recently?
4. How can emotions fatigue an individual?
5. If half-skilled acts are responsible for much of the world's weariness, what should be some of the changes in the method of child-rearing?
6. Can it be said that a person really overcomes a distraction?
7. How has nature provided against the wearing down of the body?
8. Why may we become tired of doing nothing?

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[28] Münsterberg, Hugo, *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency* (1913), p. 198.

[29] Winkler, H., "Die Monotonie des Arbeit," *Psy. Berufs*, 19: 45 (1922).

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IV

NEED OF A STUDY OF SUGGESTION

Ideas are pitiless.
LAMARTINE

I. THE LEVELS OF RESPONSE

THE greatest question that can be put concerning human beings is, "Why do we behave as we do?" It is constantly being asked and answered in various ways.

There are five sources of human behavior, or five levels of conduct. The first is that of impulse and instinct, the second that of reflex, the third that of habit, the fourth that of conscious thought, and the fifth that of the subconscious.

The first level is in the visceral region of the body where the impulses that drive us are felt. Even the ambitions that lure into the enticing future are felt in the torso section, even though they may be tempered with the highest type of deliberation. All emotions are felt mainly in this part of the body, and the famous James-Lange theory advocates this level as the seat and origin of the emotions. The instincts that move us, and, as some say, form the mainspring of all of our behavior, are also felt in this lower level of expression. Much has been written of impulse and instinct. Entire systems of psychology have been based upon them—enumerating, explaining, and offering principles for their guidance. This visceral region has received more attention than any other behavior level. It is the most primitive, and, as some think, the wildest and most savage part of us, which needs the taming control of the intellect; some writers, on the other hand, consider it even the harbor for divine urges.

The reflex level is controlled by both the spinal cord and the lower brain. Within its scope are the numerous reflexes which are native to the human being, such as blinking the eyelids, withdrawing hands from danger, reaching with the hands to explore, and many others. Much has been written of this level recently by writers who advocate reflexes in place of instincts, and attempt to explain them as the mainspring of all our action, or the foundation upon which we build our habit systems and finally our dispositions.

The third level, that of habit behavior, probably located in the lower brain, is perhaps the most prevalent form of conduct. It works mechanically, as the reflex system does, but permeates the whole field of human endeavor. Much also has been written of habit, the most classical treatise being that of Professor James, and very much more might be written on the subject.

The fourth level of behavior, that of conscious thought, is or can be, the crowning achievement of human performance. But, strange to say, it has received very little attention despite its value. It is designed to work through and control the lower levels of response and to stand as the progressive and civilizing force of mankind. Yet the layman and even the savant have not given it the deserved study.

The fifth level of behavior is that of the subconscious. It might not be the fifth or last in biological development, and hence is not to be considered the final one chronologically speaking. We place it last only as an arbitrary choice. It is the part of us that might permeate all of the other four levels. An impulse may have a subconscious origin. A reflex is generally subconscious. Habit in its last stages is controlled subconsciously. Conscious thought itself may be colored by subconscious control. Much of discomforting behavior has its source where automatic functionings strike their injurious shafts into the conscious mind. Volumes could be written on the workings of the subconscious.

Of these five sources of response, we desire to discuss especially the conscious thought level.

II. THE ABUSE OF CONSCIOUS THOUGHT

Though the conscious level is our biological equipment for creative and improved behavior, it is so little understood and so often abused that as matters stand today it is probably the source of more injury than benefit.

What aspects of conscious thought bring us our troubles? To answer this question correctly we must divide thought into at least four categories: first, that of suggestion; second, that of information; third, that of reason; and fourth, that of the mental background. These four categories comprise the four kinds of ideas that the mind harbors. In Chapter VI we shall explain and compare, in detail, these four classes of ideas.

If a psychologist should be asked which one of these categories offers us the most difficulty, he might be at a loss to reply. If pressed for an answer, he might rule out ideas of information and of the mental background. He would then be confronted with the ideas of reason and the ideas of suggestion. But on second thought he would rule out reason, for we deliberate so little that it could not be the source of much of our bad thinking. When we consider our worries, irritabilities, "inferiority complexes," lack of success, and other mental blights, we cannot very well blame them on reason. Deliberative faculties are too little exercised to be the matrix for many of our mental ills.

There is consequently left but one source for most of our mental entanglements, and that is suggestion. An idea of suggestion—and bad suggestion at that—is the culprit. The power of suggestion is the reigning force of the human mind, and we shall attempt in the following chapters to demonstrate its strength.

In spite of its power, little of a scientific nature has been written on suggestion. The author has had difficulty in providing from textbooks on psychology a sufficient and sound bibliography on the subject. Even authors who have written on psychotherapy have almost entirely neglected this very important field of study.

Naturally the unscientific description of suggestion has been the kind that has crept into the minds of laymen.

Much has been written recently on *supposed* right thinking in an attempt to deal with suggestion. A good proportion has been published in cheap pamphlets, but some has appeared in books expensively printed. It has been falsely presented, and is misleading. A great deal of this false exhortation has also come from the platform, where persons gifted with too much optimism in proportion to scholarship have planted distorted ideas in the minds of hearers, such as "a gossiping mind actually creates cancer," or "a mind not tuned to the universal vibrations of success will never succeed," or "a person will get *anything* he wants if he thinks hard enough about it." The laws of the mind are abused by ignorant speakers, lecturers, and writers who have never even taken a first course in psychology.

It is a travesty that so much false teaching is disseminated in the name of healthful thinking, for many people are thus sent off in the pursuit of shadows to find themselves sooner or later in a state of disillusionment. The number of persons thus misled is great because the public is vitally interested in anything that will promise a better mental equipment and a happier life. And the travesty is heightened because natural unhealthful thinking without right instruction is already a taproot of many of the mental ills of conscious origin. We may be right in our aims; our intentions may pass an ethical inspection; but our thinking, which is nature's means of providing ways to attain our ends, may be honeycombed with falsity. Even when dangerous impulses crowd in upon us from the subconscious, it is the faulty idea that feeds and gives them further life and strength. We do not know how to get what we legitimately want. It is, therefore, unfortunate that thinking is made worse by erroneous teaching concerning the laws of the human mind.

III. THE SCIENCE OF SUGGESTION

The scientific neglect of the subject of suggestion has been partly due to an unfortunate association.

Suggestion has been associated with hypnotism, and the latter has always been misunderstood and unfavorably received scientifically. Franz Anton Mesmer (1733–1815) first practiced on a large scale that which later became hypnotism, though it was first called "Mesmerism." Because of its rabid claims and hocus-pocus, it was exposed as a fraud in 1784 by a French commission, of which our own Benjamin Franklin was a member. But it was later discovered that excellent results could be produced by suggestion, although Mesmer's wild claims for it were not substantiated. The method was advocated by such early writers as James Braid, a British physician, in his book *Neurypnology*, and particularly by Liebeault, a French physician, in his classic work *Du Sommeil*. These studies were followed and highly endorsed in 1884–1886 by Bernheim, a professor in the Medical School at Nancy in another classic work, called *Suggestive Therapeutics*. It was found that hypnotism is suggestion carried to the nth degree. Naturally, however, the importance of the study of suggestion was marred because of the unfortunate connection with so-called Mesmerism. The abuse of hypnotism still continues, for it is faked almost daily in cheap vaudeville and circuses.

However, hypnotism is a thorough and scientific phenomenon, as proved by the scientific experiments performed at Yale University by C. L. Hull. It has been a regularly practiced routine of many scientifically trained psychologists. Moreover, Braid himself, who was a reputable British surgeon, and other physicians performed operations by hypnotism. Breuer and Freud discovered through its means many buried memories, the recovery of which led to definite cures. But in the following pages we do not want to discuss hypnotism, or suggestion in relation to it. We want to show that suggestion is not an abnormal force but an everyday phenomenon. It is more of a man's daily conduct than he realizes. It is far from an unusual form of behavior. In fact, as we hope to prove, it is a kind of a common life of a man's daily thinking. Fastening a button may be suggestion. Lighting a pipe, moving a chair, and hundreds of other routine performances, as well as more serious aspects of daily conduct, may be in the same category. It is seasonable that this important subject be sifted from its numerous misunderstandings.

We still have to meet certain objections, even from writers who dissociate suggestion from its unfortunate moorings of the past and discuss it solely on its supposed merits. It is said by them, for instance, that the mere putting of an idea in the head of a person will not produce a trait or a habit of character. This is very true. Traits or habits must be *worked* out by practice. A person cannot be loyal, honest, industrious, or confident by a mere suggestion to that effect. Such assets do not come by mere thought, but by actual development—or *by overt endeavor through exercise of body*. A mere thought cannot create any habit, for this would be contrary to nature. A habit or trait is produced by activity of the nervous and the muscle system.

But many forget that the one big obstacle in their way is still their own thinking. They do not get *started* on a desirable course because they do not think that way. A man must first think an act before he can execute it, unless it is a reflex, instinct, or another automatic response. His attention is fixed and riveted on the wrong course; it cannot in such a situation be also fixed on a right and efficient course. Consequently people do not inaugurate a new and desirable type of behavior which would often mean their mental rehabilitation. If once started by proper thoughts, a new act would be carried by right practice until it is part of personality and becomes "second nature"; but it is this first push that is prevented by wrong thinking, which in fact is misdirected attention. *Attend* to the right course and you have already started on it. This is the practical consideration, even though there are serious philosophical difficulties as to *how* an idea is followed by its corresponding action.

We shall show in the succeeding chapters that many nuisances are prolonged by wrong thinking, which thus keeps the mind from remedying its own weaknesses. The qualities of man's nature are certainly products of nerve and muscle labor and not of mere thought; but thought can stand in the way of desired activity. If wrong attention or wrong thinking can hold intact, for instance, worry and irritability, following exercise of them, proper thinking will also keep serenity and peace of mind intact and allow them to exercise themselves and become strong. The mind must be properly set before nerves and muscles are properly set.

Suggestion, therefore, as a means of getting a start in new and beneficial activities has a perfectly legitimate place in a therapeutic treatise.

IV. ALL THOUGHTS ARE NOT PRACTICAL

It is, however, often futile for people to be convinced that any mere thought can launch a desired act or result. Many ideas are so preposterous that they will not even initiate the act that will bring what is desired. The thought of getting an automobile will not bring it to your door. The only way a psychologist can advise in this respect is to tell the inquirer to go out and earn a purse full of money and then purchase it. A mere thought will not begin the construction of a new house. Work and money are the immediate means to this end. A mere thought of instilling qualities of personalities by supposing that a star overhead controls destiny will not start even a faint glimmer of a horoscopic disposition. The mere thought of rain will never start rain.

The ideas effective in furnishing beginnings of desired endeavors are those which are naturally within the scope of a human being. We cannot practically think of the absurd, the illogical, or the impossible. What we think in suggestion is useful only when it can be realized in practical results.

V. A TREATISE ON MENTAL HYGIENE

We are today developing a new human emphasis—the study of man himself from a psychological viewpoint, the study of the principles and laws of the mind. We are becoming as much interested in gaining a knowledge of the means of better mental control as we are in mastering the impersonal forces of the shop and factory. Mental control can come mainly through suggestion, or right thinking. Without a knowledge of the principles of suggestion a person is handicapped in seizing the throttle of mastery of his own mind. A study of mental hygiene must be embedded in the study of suggestion if it is going to be comprehensive.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Show how misdirected attention was a hindrance to a desirable new activity by citing an example in your own experience.
2. Why will mere thought not build qualities into your mind?
3. Show how unhealthy thinking breeds mental ills.

V

THE POWER OF AN IDEA

A fixed idea ends in madness or heroism.
VICTOR HUGO

I. HOW POTENT ARE IDEAS?

This may seem to be a strange question, for it is common for people to regard their thoughts as their own private mental toys. This mental license is regarded as innocent gymnastics. "I can think as I please, even though I can't act as I please," says one; or, "My ideas belong to my own inner sanctuary, and they can be anything I want them to be with no need of outside consequences," says another. "If a man cannot treat his own thoughts as his own private kingdom, where can freedom lie?" is also asked.

This supposed freedom of thinking is a cherished idea of almost all people. Serious, calamitous, momentous, trivial, fantastic, ridiculous, social, and antisocial notions run through the mind. Ideas of intrigues and plottings, saintliness and deviltry, murders and benefactions race in the mental relay! "What difference does it make if I can think as I please?"

Yet it is thought that helps rule the world. A war that spreads its flames across the earth is preceded by an idea. In fact, the sponsor of every navy, of every army, of every gun, of every munition factory is previously an idea. Every great movement, whether a conquest of a nation or the conquering of the South Pole, is born of an idea. Every giant engineering project that drills a mountain tunnel or spans a mighty river first builds from the intangibility of an idea. Every bit of progress comes from this detonation of an idea. All this is very obvious, although we fail to see the fact as so evident.

Are ideas then just mental toys, or are they mental dynamite? There is obviously some misunderstanding. The confusion is due to the fact that there is a vast difference between ideas. There are ideas—and *ideas.* All ideas cannot be powerful or the human world would have blown itself to bits with too many jarring and contradictory thoughts. In the minds of thousands there are ideas nestling that are of no more worth than inane ebullitions. Why plead with people "to use their own heads" if all ideas are effective? Some assortment, therefore, of them is necessary. Which class is the real dynamite of the mind? It is what psychologists call "ideas of suggestion." But why are they the most powerful mainsprings of action? To answer the question in detail is the purpose of this chapter.

No other division of psychology is more misunderstood than the study of the power of ideas. A pitiably few people know the matchless weapon at their disposal in the form of a thought. But psychologists themselves have perhaps been a little lax in explaining the principles of suggestion. They have probably been busy with "other cities to conquer," or lost in the dignity of a too lofty academic atmosphere, and the layman has been forgotten.

II. SUGGESTION EXPLAINED

A. The Welcome of an Idea of Suggestion

The mind can be compared to a sponge which is nothing more than a quiet, nonreacting recipient of whatever liquid comes in contact with it. This may appear an unfair analogy, but it very well explains the first important meaning of suggestion. A high school graduate says to himself, "Let's go to work, why bother about college"; a war lord casually says in the presence of a group, "Our national neighbor will give us trouble in two years"; or a man says to himself, "Life is not worth living." The human sponge begins to function: the idea is allowed an unobstructed entrance into a mind, and an uninterrupted stay; it then incubates without the owner knowing it, and soon unpleasant and very often disastrous results follow because of this too free thinking. The experience is first a thought with no expectation of seeing it translated into an overt performance.

According to this first principle, the mind opens its doors and anything may enter. The subjects of education, romance, family, inheritance, business, morals, manners—in fact, every compartment of life—are the seepage that the mental sponge takes in when the mind is under suggestion. It does not matter whether the mental sponge absorbs "sewer or spring water," or healthful or unhealthful ideas; it is still a sponge while under suggestion.✓ It drinks up its ideas just the same. Sorokin and Baldyreff,[1] in an experiment on 1,484 subjects, found that 96 per cent followed false, dogmatic suggestion. Only 4 per cent were able to hold their own sense of discrimination against the dogmatic statements.

We commend the open-minded spirit when it comes to tolerance, but when it comes to the far-flung field of suggestion, we need to shut the mental door once in a while, although, as we shall show, we need to be under the power of suggestion in certain aspects of life. Of course, we are speaking figuratively when we write of ideas seeping into the mind as though they came from the outside, or from another mind. Ideas, strictly speaking, can arise only in one's own mind. What comes from the outside is only a stimulus for such an arousal.

When a man is under the power of suggestion, his ideas are as unquestioned as the wind that sweeps through our forests. √ They enter the open mental door with nothing to demand a password from them. A girl is told in her ninth year by an astrologer that at sixteen she will die of an insanity malady. She absorbs the idea, and when she becomes sixteen, her parents lay her in a grave, even though there isn't anything organically wrong with her brain and not the slightest bodily justification for expecting a fatal disease. A fortune teller announces to a credulous young lady that she will always be struggling for money. As a result, she becomes a victim of worry, marries a very poor man with no vocational training, and ends her days in a fight to keep the wolf away from the door. It is no wonder that fortune tellers are "popular," for their success, if any, is often assured by those who make a thing come true by the power of their own suggestion. A young boy is told by playmates that he is dumb, and, accepting the idea unconditionally, he begins to slink around corners, in spite of the fact that he has plenty of excellent ability. He made himself act dumb. √ A young man is told that he is a thief, accepts the accusation, and thereafter turns into a notorious criminal, even though his first motive for "stealing" was just playing a prank on a fussy groceryman by taking his biggest banana. √ He made himself unwittingly into a thief. A fellow Rotarian is told that he has no leadership ability, the idea seeps in, and thereafter he retires from community participation, even though he actually has much leadership. He smothered his own ability by suggestion.

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[1] Sorokin, P. A., and Baldyreff, J. W., "An Experimental Study of the Influence of Suggestion on the Discrimination of People," *American Journal of Sociology*, 37: 720–737 (No. 5, March, 1932).

People are blind, and fail to see that they themselves make many an idea come true by their gullibility. It is not necessarily true when it comes to them, but they make it so by the way they think about it. Just why it becomes true will be later explained.

Spongelike minds absorb ideas just at their face value even when there is plenty of evidence that the acceptance is absurd and ridiculous. Reason most of the time is in abeyance for the majority of people, and ideas of suggestion—often bad—possess the mind. Thousands of people, anywhere and everywhere, of all color and in every clime, of all degrees of education and culture, of all marks of physical strength, are duped by their own minds.

✓This first principle of suggestion is, therefore, the unobstructed acceptance of an idea, with no desire whatever to check up on its validity or invalidity. Its worth is freely taken at its absolute face value. ✓

This kind of acceptance of an idea must not be taken to mean just a mere attention to an idea. If this were all, then any idea we think about would be included. All the thousands of ideas we pick up from hearing others speak, from books, magazines, and newspapers; all the ideas that sift through our minds in meditation would be ideas of suggestion. For we at least *think* about them or give them our attention. Suggestion then would not mean anything special—just an idea merely entertained in attention.

Thousands of these ideas that race through our minds are of no special concern to us. We do not *care* about them. We give them only a theoretical consideration. In suggestion, on the contrary, we *care* about an idea. Münsterberg[2] says that *suggestion is a belief in an idea*, or an acceptance of it as real, or as something to be worked out in practical consequence. With belief there is an unquestioned acceptance. It is an immediate conviction without any pro and con argument that the idea is good and sound enough to be used. There is no asking questions of an idea when it is suggestion. Merely to have an idea of murdering a man may not do any harm, but to be under suggestion to murder him would be very dangerous. It is strange that conviction may be instilled in one man's mind by another even when there has been no deliberate working up of this conviction by the conveyor. Nevertheless, a person under suggestion believes in the value of an idea as a practical agent, and acts as if he has worked up this conviction of its unquestioned validity from the depths of his mind. This makes ideas of suggestion a special class by themselves.

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[2] Münsterberg, Hugo, *Psychotherapy* (1909), p. 100.

B. The Entertainment Accorded an Idea of Suggestion

But to receive an idea in an uncritical spirit is not sufficient to establish suggestion. An idea must have a *certain place* in the mind—right in the center of attention. Other kinds of ideas enter the mind, but they saunter about and do not become focal; we give them very little heed. But ✓ideas of suggestion deposit themselves right in the focus of consciousness, and there they remain until realized in activity. ✓

At the sight of a bakery wagon a child gets the suggestion of eating doughnuts, and this thought dominates until the child has satisfied this desire for food. In Florida and Los Angeles during their respective boom days the idea was planted by suggestion that their prosperity would soon break. ✓ This idea finally became a ruling passion and even a mania; it became the spearhead of the mind. All the speculators were helpless in the face of it, until it realized its own truth and the crash came. During the depression of 1929 the idea was planted so centrally in the minds of people that it would last for a good stretch of years that the people themselves after two or three years were holding back the day of prosperity. They thought of nothing else but the depression. The depression lasted many unnecessary months because of this attention to the wrong idea; the economic crash had long spent itself, and the depleted shelves in stores and the bad machinery in factories testified to a readiness for a recovery, but the thinking of the people stepped in the way.

If ideas of suggestion merely floated about in the mind, they would be innocent and ineffective. But they become focal and lead all other ideas before them, becoming the dazzling light that blinds everything else. Occupying the center of consciousness is a necessary condition for effective suggestion.

The center of the mind is, of course, not a geographical center. It simply means the idea or ideas upon which one's greatest attention is focused. Naturally there is no territory of the mind which could be divided into sections, or of which a center could be mapped out.

An idea of suggestion may be sidetracked at certain hours of the day, but the mind may have a readiness or suggestibility to center the idea again. Suggestibility does not mean that a person thinks only of *one* idea and attends to nothing else. He would be insane if he did. But it does mean that when in the presence of a certain situation or stimulus, a certain idea springs up in the focus of attention and is unquestionably accepted. People were not always and exclusively thinking of the last depression, but when confronted with monthly bills or unemployment, the idea of a long depression arose again in the center of the mind and exclusively occupied their thoughts. Many ideas are ready, as it were, to *control* first-degree attention when the stimulus-occasion arises.

C. *The Interest in an Idea of Suggestion*

Another characteristic of suggestion may be considered as interest; but this is really a corollary of the second condition. Centering an idea in attention already implies interest, for we attend to things only when we are interested.✓ Often it is a strange and morbid interest. Why should a young man under suggestion be carried away by a revolting rape and murder crime in California and do the same thing? Why should a person allow his mind to dwell on slander and ruin his neighbor? We see a good reason for interest in certain ideas. Shock comes to our attention like a very brilliant light, and we must attend to it because of its intensity in order to prevent injury; there is undoubtedly a biological interest in attending to that which so strongly effects us. When we are startled by the sight of a wreck, we are biologically interested in seeing how people are injured, for we are much concerned in avoiding certain dangers or hurting ourselves. We are much interested in what *might* come our way. But it is difficult to explain why man nurses so many curious and even self-annihilating ideas. The fact remains that the personal interest in an idea of suggestion, whether good or bad, beneficial or injurious, magnanimous or devastating, is striking. No other kind of an idea—not even of reason—receives this personal interest, morbid as it might be at times. The immediate belief stamped upon an idea of suggestion carries such a personal interest that we act as though the idea were the most personal thing in our lives. ✓We are so interested in the idea of suggestion that we turn it into activity without hesitation, as though it had a very vital relation to ourselves. The reason for having this personal interest is a subject that requires close study and investigation.

D. The Exclusiveness of an Idea of Suggestion

✓ Belief in an idea and centering it in attention are not yet sufficient to establish all the conditions of suggestion. An idea of suggestion must be the *only* idea attended to at the time. ✓ Of course, this idea may be complex and include many partial ideas, but they must all pertain to the one thing. An idea of suggestion has no rival. If I move a chair by command of another, and his command acts by way of suggestion, no other idea at the moment is competing for attention.

Often varied and even contradictory ideas flit in and out of the mind in mere observation. It is now one idea and then another, like going through a department store noting this and that. No one idea is allowed to stay in attention. Others are competing against it. In addition, in a situation of volition we find two ideas competing for final attention. It is often a tossup, one, and then the other, commanding attention.

But in suggestion a different, opposite, or competing idea in the center of attention is entirely out of the running. And it is out of the running, without any volition or a mental struggle. If a boy is under suggestion and smokes his first cigarette because of another's prompting, the contrary idea at that time never competes. It is as if the mind in suggestion is taken off guard, and the idea has the exclusive right of way without any fuss whatsoever. Competing ideas are rendered ineffective as if by magic.

We do not know the neurology of suggestion—how ideas are given this exclusive right of way—but the fact remains that it has this right. This too makes it a special province of study. When the schoolboy is told that he is dumb, it takes such a hold on his mind that the contrary idea does not enter his head. It is only when the spell of suggestion is broken—and it might last for years—that the contrary idea has a chance to be considered and the boy is given an opportunity to be saved.

An idea of suggestion, therefore, holds the mental throne. All is sidetracked in its favor. Suggestion is thus the greatest ruler in the world. We may almost say that it becomes the mind itself, for what is solely in the center of attention without a competing idea is the center of consciousness. An idea of suggestion is virtually all there is to the mind at the moment. It is this exclusiveness that makes an idea of suggestion virtually synonymous with mind.

E. The Immediate Workability of an Idea of Suggestion

However, the most important condition of suggestion is yet to be explained. A man gets an idea from someone to the effect that he has no business ability, though he is in business and doing well. He is surprised, but nevertheless accepts it on its face value. The idea grows in his mind. He attends to nothing else for the time being.

But it becomes something more. *It seizes him* and he falls under its spell. He surrenders entirely to its power and does its bidding. He quits business. A person at this stage gives up his personal control of himself and has an idea as his master. ✓*He personifies the idea and it dominates him.* ✓His own mental child out-maneuvers him as the idea obsesses his consciousness. At this point we begin to see the matchless power of suggestion.

The author once presented a problem of obsession to one of his classes: He offered to bet $500 with any member of the class that one year from the date at 4:00 P.M. he (the member) would commit suicide by shooting himself in the temple. The students were eager to earn such a sum of money until told of the conditions. These were:

> First, that the one taking up the bet have a horror of committing suicide. This point would test very thoroughly the power of suggestion; otherwise the bet would be too one-sided.
>
> Second, that every day the chosen member should say to himself ten times *without ever* questioning its wisdom or truth, "I shall commit sucide at 4:00 P.M. on [the date given]." There was to be an *unshakeable faith* in the truth of the idea even though the subject did not *want* to commit suicide.

Obviously, no one took up the bet, for the students saw that to follow the conditions, if one could, would inevitably lead to suicide. It would be quite impossible for anyone to maintain the conditions of the bet, especially the second. It would be too easy to say, "This is foolish," or "I don't believe that I will commit suicide," or "This idea is a grand hoax," thus violating entirely the experiment. But the proffered bet illustrates the fact of obsession, and hence of suggestion. If a person gets the idea of suicide in his head and does not question it, suicide will surely follow. The same principle applies to any idea of suggestion, whether innocent or serious.

Why does an idea of suggestion inevitably lead to action? Because when an idea obsesses the mind—and everyone while under suggestion is obsessed, if only for a second—it becomes independent of the person's will and intent, and sets itself up in power. This means that it goes into definite overt behavior or observed action of its *own accord* cut off from a person's control. An idea of suggestion is not a matter of deliberation, or of planning, but is as though another person had taken possession of an individual and initiated his behavior for him. Since it is a belief, it goes into action by its own strength, and the rest of the mind merely looks on. Here, *thought itself* is independently converted into muscle or movement. How, we do not know.

An illustration of this point may be seen by holding the arm upright, resting lightly on its elbow. Center attention without questioning upon the *idea* of moving the arm, without *deliberately* moving it, to the left, to the right, to the front, and then to the back. Do not think of the arm or of its muscles. Shut them out of your thought, and aid yourself in this respect by closing your eyes. Attention should be centered only on the *thought* of movement and *not on the arm itself*. When these conditions are met, the subject will be surprised to find, upon opening his eyes, that he has moved his arm in the direction of his thought without having tried to do so.

The same point is illustrated in the old experiment of holding a watch up by a chain between the thumb and index finger of either hand, with the arm resting lightly on the elbow and with eyes closed, so that the watch can swing freely in a pendulum motion. Here, as in the previous experiment, you forget what is in your hand and concentrate only on the *thought* of moving the watch, right and left, or front and back, without *trying* to move it. The watch follows the *thought* and moves in the intended direction without the subject even knowing that it is moving.

In the author's psychological laboratory one of Hull's[3] suggestion experiments was tried. A pinhook was fastened to the back of a subject's collar. To this pinhook was attached a cord, which, when pulled forward, allowed a lever to write upward on a smoked drum and make a line-record, or, when released, allowed the lever to write downward. The subject was told to *think* of falling frontward or backward, but not to deliberately or actually do so; or, that is, he was not to put his mind on his *body* directly. He was to stand straight and not *plan* to sway, but merely to *think* of doing so. Many records indicated that the *mere thought* of swaying puts the body in action. Even when the subjects are told to plan an upright position, they sway when they are *told* that they are leaning forward or backward, and without knowing it.

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[3] Hull, C. L., *Hypnosis and Suggestibility* (1933), p. 42.

What is here described as the fifth phase of suggestion is what James[4] meant by idea-motor action. No fiat of the will is added to set off an idea. There is nothing more needed to turn an idea into an act than the idea itself. The notion of an act is followed "unhesitantly and immediately" by its movement.

Thus, as James says, the mere thought of seeing a pin on the floor makes will power unnecessary before the subject picks it up. The mere idea turns itself into action of its own accord, and the pin is picked up without deliberation or will power. The mere idea of dust on one's sleeve is all that is needed to brush it off. The mere notion of eating nuts and raisins out of a dish on the table is turned into the actual eating with no need of a mental command. The very getting out of bed on a cold morning is more often a result of just an idea of "Hello! I must lie here no longer" than a struggling of conflicting ideas and the breaking of the deadlock by will power. The mere *thought* of getting up gets us up. Alexander Bain[5] and W. B. Carpenter[6] have also emphasized the power of *thought itself* to produce action.

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[4] James, William, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 522ff.

[5] Bain, Alexander, *Senses and Intellect*, pp. 336–348.

[6] Carpenter, W. B., *Principles of Mental Physiology*, Chap. VI.

This immediate turning of an idea into an act in a reflexive rather than in a voluntary manner is emphasized still further by Lotze[7] when he says that the movement follows so directly upon the idea, or "pure flux of thought," that we are not even aware of the movement until after it is done. This is the unconscious aspect of suggestion. We feel we *have* moved or acted, and do not feel the movement in *process.* In idea-motor action, activity is so much a part of an idea that it leads out of it without our knowing it. We say the unkind word before we know it. We show the scowl on our faces before we know it. Muscular feeling in suggestion is afferent rather than efferent. A feeling of activity comes only after we have acted in idea-motor conduct.

Münsterberg[8] also emphasizes this idea-motor effect. Since suggestion is an immediate belief in an idea, we have a ready basis for action. A belief, he says, carries with it a motor adjustment in which there is an immediate opening of a motor channel. Contrary action is blocked at once.[9]

In the presentation of suggestion we do not advocate, as we have already said, any theory as to how an idea is followed by activity. We do not know how an idea can be first a nerve current, then a muscle movement, and finally a visible act as a result. In the practical study of suggestion it is not necessary to inquire how an idea and its mechanical act are connected. Suffice it to say that when an idea fulfills the conditions for suggestion, action automatically takes place. The idea is the trigger that sets off the gun.

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[7] Lotze, I., *Medicinische Psychologie,* pp. 293, 311.

[8] Münsterberg, Hugo, *op. cit.,* p. 102.

[9] Suggestion may take the form of a mere belief without any *overt* effect, such as believing the earth is round, according to Münsterberg; but even in fixing this mere belief, contrary action is blocked, while the belief sets the whole physical organism in its direction.

A traveler stands in wonder before a Hindu magician after hearing of his "miracle" of producing a man climbing a rope when there is really no man or rope. As a preliminary the Hindu produces a real rope fastened above with a real man climbing it. This is done until the mind of the traveler is set to see the rope and the man, and even to want to see them. Here the suggestion seizes his mind and he is ready to witness the "miracle." When the magician then makes a motion with the hand of throwing a rope in the air, the unreal rope and the unreal man are "strangely" put before the spectator, but the traveler does not realize that he has projected his own thought into an act and made his eyes see the thing he wants to see. His state of suggestion makes it come true. His own thought turns automatically into his own behavior, but it appears so independent of his mind that he is dumbfounded.

Dubois,[10] a French neurologist, experimented with suggestion, and was the first to discover, through Dr. Schnyder, his assistant, that a man holding electrodes would feel a current not only when it was turned on, but also when it was merely suggested that the current was turned on. He says that two thirds of his patients complained during mere suggestion of various sensations of pricking, warmth, or burning, and took pleasure in describing them minutely. The *thought* of receiving an electric current produced of its own accord a corresponding bodily effect even when no current was present.

A friend of Dubois went into a barber shop one winter's day and warmed himself by an unlighted stove. The suggestion naturally came to him that it would be lighted on a cold day, and this idea produced, without deliberation or will, the bodily condition of warmth. He was surprised when later told that the fire was out. Here ideas became sensations.

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[10] Dubois, Paul, *The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders* (1909, translated by S. E. Jelliffe), pp. 110–111.

A label of an excellent cigar put around a poor one will sometimes make it actually taste much better than it ordinarily does. Here the *idea* of a good taste translates itself into an apparently real sensory taste without one's control. Ordinary wine taken from a bottle labeled with an excellent brand may actually taste as if it were excellent until the guest is told otherwise. In any classroom the students in being presented bottle after bottle of perfume may actually smell a most attractive "make" when all that is uncorked at one point in the experiment is a bottle of plain water. In hazing students a slow falling of drops of water from a "cut" wrist of a blindfolded victim is said to be drops of blood, and this suggestion has set up howling pain and sometimes results in a case of hysteria and fainting.

A group of students in a German medical college hazed a "plebe" by having him lie on the floor with his neck across a block and announcing that he was going to have his head severed. After the announcement of the descent of the axe, they found him very pale and motionless, and upon a further examination discovered that he was dead. Fear may be only an idea, but it can be strong enough to kill a man.

Thus we see that an idea of suggestion has its own *automatic release*. When we deal with suggestion, an idea is just the inside of an act, while an act is just the outside of an idea. No one can understand suggestion unless he realizes that suggestion assumes its *own* prerogative, creates its *own* power, and initiates of its *own* strength an evident bit of behavior.

Suggestion is independent not only of a person's will but, as we have said, even of his wish, for who wants to punish himself by a fear idea. Who wants to drag himself down with a thought of worthlessness? Who wants to think that life is a failure? Who wants to be carried away by the thought of a crime and be imprisoned or electrocuted for it? Since the idea in the center of attention is father of the act, it would not follow that every act executed is what the individual wants. Ideas being no respecter of persons, or of ethics, we find ourselves doing many things which bring chagrin and even ruin. We do many things because we think about them, and not necessarily because we want to do them. Of course, we are *interested* in what we think about, but we may not *want* to be interested.

It is no wonder that many people say that they are not responsible for certain of their acts because it appears as though an outside force takes control of them. A man under suggestion is caught in the web of an independent master.

Various writers have said that suggestion means a "split consciousness." This is an acceptable way of presenting the matter, for, as we have shown, an act of suggestion is done while a part of the mind looks on. We do not control the automatic release of an idea of suggestion. When a person is not even aware of what he has done (for instance, a sour look at an enemy) until his attention is called to it, he may later wonder why he performed the action. But whether a person is or is not aware of the working of suggestion, it is always, in its final behavioristic expression, free from will and often of intent.

The layman realizes very little of the full significance of an idea planted uncritically in the focus of consciousness and having its own automatic release. Here is an unexcelled power within the human mind. A man is not only *obsessed* but *possessed*, and a force other than that of his will is leading him into a bewildering gamut of behavior. And it is indiscriminate in its dealings. Horrible as well as magnificent, ugly as well as beautiful, harmful as well as beneficial, an idea's arbitrary, dogmatic, dictatorial ruling is followed by an act. We now see why an idea might be a very potent force for good or ill in the world. Material or bodily effects are only an automatic sign of its presence.

Wrong suggestion today is the mental tool that wrecks and destroys. Nietzsche, a weak and sickly German philosopher, as a compensation for his maudlin timidity, wrote a philosophy of might which finally seeped into the mind of the great German nation by suggestion.

Propaganda sows its seed through suggestion. If people were encouraged to examine critically the issues of a cause, there would be no propaganda which hurtles the public too often to their own injury. Propaganda supported by suggestion spreads by the greatest mental contagion in existence. It automatically releases itself into the type of behavior desired. Propaganda slogans must be powerful enough to create suggestion, or slogans would never be rallying points. Every soldier is nothing but an unthinking machine when under suggestion. This must be so if wars are to be fought. If a captain were to tell his company to think over the *advisability* of going "over the top" at 5 A.M., that would be the beginning of the end of the war. They go "over the top" because of a command, and this works by suggestion.

Many politicians work up their "thunder" to hoodwink the public by the force of suggestion, for if the voters were permitted to think very much, there would be no such thing as the proverbial politician.

Suggestion can kill a person's reputation in half a day. Let the report be spread that Mr. So-and-So is losing his hold on people and in an incredibly short time this idea might automatically release itself in conduct, and people might shun and criticize the victim. Yet the victim need not do a single thing to deserve this reaction.

Let an innocent man be mistakingly pointed out as a murderer, and thought would unconsciously display itself in hatred and violence, whereas the rectifying of the mistake would just as automatically produce the opposite effect.

But suggestion also serves as a great constructive agency. Healings by physicians can be accounted for mostly by suggestion. Health is largely a matter of healthy ideas. Religion is mostly a matter of suggestion. World peace may be established by suggestion. Human betterment in a hundred aspects may be furthered through suggestion.

When a man is asked, "How often is the average person under the power of suggestion?" he is a little indefinite about the answer. But it is safe to say that man's ideas are mostly products of suggestion. It is naturally the most prevalent form of activity, for, as James[11] says, it is the most fundamental and simplest kind of expression. If "pure flux" of thought just in and of itself did not naturally produce activity, most human beings would be quite actionless.

When a man examines the number of ideas that daily guide his conduct, he is astonished to find how much he is under the spell of an idea that acts like a foreign potentate over his own inner private mind.

III. SUMMARY

A. Suggestion is an idea received *uncritically* into the mind and believed.

B. Its idea is *centered* in attention.

C. Its idea is of *marked* interest.

D. Its idea is the *unrivaled* possessor of attention.

E. Its idea is *empowered* with an *automatic* release.

We can easily see that suggestion as treated by the psychologist is very different from that employed by the layman, which merely means an idea hinted at to another in order to have him think it over. Thinking over a thing, in the sense of critically estimating an idea, has no place in suggestion.

The explanation of suggestion as here given is mostly of the "direct" or "hereto" kind. Even an object can directly effect us by suggestion. A ringing of a school bell may put the idea in the student's mind that the class period is over, and, as a result, he may impulsively rise and leave.

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[11] James, William, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

So both persons and inanimate things may convey ideas to us which we accept by way of suggestion. Other forms of suggestion will be discussed in the following chapters, and we shall see how bad suggestion is the lurking cause of a man's failure, or of his halting efficiency.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the mind unquestionably accepting an idea?
2. Can you figure out why some people allow strange ideas to plant themselves in their minds and obsess them? Is there always some interest in matters to which we give attention?
3. How closely connected is mind and body as demonstrated by suggestion? Can you illustrate?
4. What factors make suggestion lead directly and strongly into activity?
5. How can suggestion make people think that an impersonal outside force often controls their lives?
6. Why is suggestion the most powerful form of thought?

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VI

SUGGESTION AND OTHER FIELDS OF IDEAS

We live in an age in which superfluous ideas abound and essential ideas are lacking.

JOUBERT

I. INTRODUCTION

In order that the student may clearly see in relief the subject of suggestion in comparison with other kinds of ideas, it is advisable to devote a short chapter to this comparison.

Since suggestion applies to ideas, and there are various kinds of ideas, a presentation of all the main varieties may disperse confusion that may possibly be lurking in the mind of the reader as to the meaning of suggestion.

As we have discussed in the previous chapter, suggestion deals only with a special kind of ideas. To suppose that any sort of an idea in any part of the mind can be as powerful as suggestion is entirely to misunderstand the subject. Only a practical idea which meets certain specific conditions is the material for suggestion.

To simplify the various kinds of ideas in consciousness, we shall divide them into four classes:

I. Ideas of Suggestion
II. Ideas of Information
III. Ideas of Reason
IV. Ideas of the Mental Background

As we have seen, there are five characteristics of an idea of suggestion:

(A) Its immediate and unquestioned belief
(B) Its focal attention
(C) Its personal interest
(D) Its exclusiveness
(E) Its automatic release

II. IDEAS OF SUGGESTION

The belief in an idea of suggestion carries with it a wide-open mind with a feeling that it is for immediate expression, or of practical value. It is as if an idea of suggestion carries on its surface a tag of unquestioned truth whether it is actually true or not.

Figure 10 may serve to delineate further the subject of suggestion. A represents the idea, X, in the center of the mind. There is no rivalry of another idea for the center of attention. The idea of suggestion is in full control of the focus of consciousness. Being in the center of the mind and meeting all the conditions necessary for suggestion, it automatically goes into action. B represents the background ideas of the mind; but, while present in consciousness, they are virtually independent of the idea in the center, and give the latter an exclusive right of way.

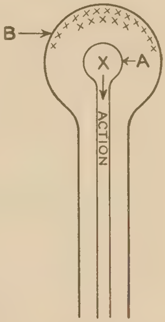

Figure 10.

III. IDEAS OF INFORMATION

Our next step is to explain the interesting set of ideas called "information." Some persons may have some objection to the characteristics which we ascribe to ideas of information, but we hope to show that these characteristics apply to the great mass of information poured into our heads. In order to compare it to an idea of suggestion, we would like to offer the following marks of an idea of information:

(A) Its impersonal aspect
(B) Its casual attention
(C) Its casual interest
(D) Its nonexclusiveness
(E) Its nonautomatic release

Information is impersonal in nature. If not, then education would not be much of a problem. Knowledge, *as such*, imparted to students is of only an academic or theoretical concern. And it is a perpetual struggle of educators to give it a personal and vital value. Once in a while a student is awakened to realize the personal benefit derived from information, as when one is studying medicine or law for a profession; but when the student sees this personal value in information, it is *transformed* into something quite different. It is turned into ideas of reason, or ideas of suggestion. It is this transforming of ideas of information into another category which is, or should be, the aim of the teacher. If the student could reason about his information, or have it settle in his mind as suggestion, then it would be effective. Otherwise it is still impersonal and academic.

To emphasize this impersonal quality of information, it may be asked how personally concerned a student is in hearing that Caesar crossed the Rubicon, or Napoleon crossed the Alps, or that William Wallace of Scotland was put to death in 1305 A. D., or often even that George Washington was the first President of the United States. The student preparing to teach history, or one who really values the heritage of our country, may be personally concerned in the fact that Washington was our first President, but then this idea becomes one of reasoning or of suggestion. We know that the average student could eat his dinner just the same whether Caesar did or did not cross the Rubicon, and so with the mass of information as such which he picks up.

There is no immediate personal conviction or belief in an idea of information, as there is in an idea of suggestion.

The former does not bear immediately upon its surface a personal and practical value.

Further, information draws only casual attention. It is difficult to get students to center attention strongly on what is being read or heard. The problem of concentration is always present with the pupil as he fleetingly skims over his lesson or lecture notes and thinks of his next date, or how much money he is going to make in the month. But in suggestion, attention offers no problem. When under suggestion, the subject is absorbed in an idea.

Information also gets only casual interest. If the student is not personally concerned with Caesar's crossing the Rubicon, he would not be very much interested in the idea. Obviously, if there were a vital interest in information, educators would not be puzzled with means to inject interest in the classroom. But when interest is present, information is transformed into another set of ideas. In suggestion, interest is never lacking.

Information is also nonexclusive in attention value. Being of only casual interest, it is not focused in the center of attention, and thus an idea of information does not inhibit other ideas. Information is poured into the mind in mass formation with no idea dwelling very deeply in attention. One idea is rapidly shoved aside for another. Information is like a flight of ideas, or a speedily moving kaleidoscope. This is the case whether we are listening to a lecture or observing in the market place. But in suggestion, an idea is arrested from its flight and given an exclusive place in the center of consciousness.

Naturally, if information is impersonal, of casual attention, of casual interest, and nonexclusive, it has no automatic release in action. In fact, considering the great mass of information, there is little action of any practical sort. Would that there were, for colleges would then be one hundred per cent efficient. Information is held too aloof from the student's life. But action—and automatic action—is the very heart of suggestion. An idea of suggestion must be entertained before it can be translated into behavior.

Figure 11 shows the characteristics of information. A represents the focus or center of consciousness, with no idea, X, in the center holding the first degree of attention. B represents our background ideas, while C represents the ideas of information which are near the focus, but never occupying it. No idea of information is exclusively occupying the center of attention, for each one is too ready to flee from focal attention to the margin or near the margin of the mind, to be forgotten or vaguely remembered.

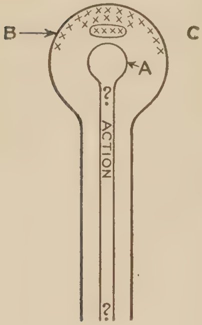

Figure 11.

IV. IDEAS OF REASON

There is no doubt that ideas of reason stand out as a special class by themselves, although the layman is not fully aware of the condition of his mind when he reasons. In comparing reason and suggestion we find the following characteristics of an idea of reason:

(A) Its mediate belief
(B) Its focal attention
(C) Its indirect personal interest
(D) Its nonexclusiveness
(E) Its nonautomatic release

As can be seen, the conditions present in the mind for reasoning are quite distinct from those for suggestion or information. The first characteristic is a key quality of the reasoning mind. The belief in an idea does not come on its surface as it does in suggestion. No truth in reason is vouched for and advertised in advance as in suggestion. Truth must be discovered, or searched for and found, through reasoning; it is something that must prove itself before an idea is accepted. An idea of reason is always on the defensive, while an idea of suggestion is never on the defensive. The merit of the latter is immediately established and its acceptance is just as immediate.

Hence the practical workability of an idea of reason comes through the medium of search or discovery. Being held up and examined first before acceptance, the belief in it is *mediate* and not *immediate.*

The second characteristic is evident. Deliberation takes place in the center of the mind. Reasoning and focal attention can never be dissociated. One idea is checked by another. Ideas come in pairs when a man reasons. And so absorbed may he become in a problem that he may be absent-minded about the things around him. Only one idea can occupy the focus of consciousness, it is true, but for practical purposes we can say that the comparison of ideas in reason is a unitary process and two ideas are compared as a unit series.

The third characteristic needs little explanation. There is generally an interest of some kind in a problem which we try to solve. It may not always be warmly welcomed, for a problem may be forced upon us, as when a man is trying to save his business from failure, or when a mother is concerned over her wayward boy. But even here, while the problem is unwelcome, there is vital concern in the solution. Even when the student unwillingly thinks out a problem in philosophy, there is an interest in meeting the requirement of the teacher in order to secure a good grade. Many problems, however, offer warm interest; as, for example, where to spend a vacation, how to spend a fortune, or how to choose the right type of architecture for a new house. Marked interest is always present in working out any problem, although the interest may at times be centered only on results, with little pleasure in the means of reasoning, or in the process of reasoning itself. In suggestion, interest is direct, by being centered *in* the idea.

In reasoning, the interest is indirect, coming from the solution.

The fourth characteristic of reason is perhaps its principal one. The very heart of reasoning is a back-and-forth shift between one idea and another. No one idea holds the throne. It is first one, and then the other. It is this shifting that constitutes reasoning. The search for the right idea provides no exclusive membership to any one idea; all are on probation.

To simplify reasoning, let us represent the center of attention with at least two ideas, as in Figure 12, one checking up on the other. In fact, they are rivals struggling with each other to determine the winner. For our purpose, as we have said, it may be permitted to consider them as being together in a unit even though one gives the other but a temporary and questionable tenure. The right of an idea to be in the center of the mind is always questioned.

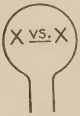

Figure 12.

This deadlocking of ideas in the process of reasoning is the condition that holds up action. We deliberately do not act in reasoning because we do not know how to act. We reason so that we will be showed the way. *Reason in its nature is suspended action.* But in suggestion, action is an integral part of the idea and is virtually the idea itself.

Reasoning, or deliberating, is *itself* not practical. Action is not connected with it as a process. Action comes only when reasoning is over and we have found what we think is a solution. Consequently, reason in itself keeps the individual in a state of inactivity. The expression of the individual is shut off for the time being, for reasoning is only *preparation* for expression.

As we shall consider in a following chapter, reasoning may be the bane of many a person's existence, for it may do him more harm than good. Instead of being the "Queen of Science," it is for him the "Devil of Science." The reasoning man spends most of his time in suspended action, and he accomplishes very little. He is shut within himself and is not a progressive, energetic creature. Everything he thinks of doing has a doubt about it. He is so constantly checking up on every idea that his mind for most of the day is imprisoned by too much reasoning. Means to aid activity has then become an end in itself, and activity becomes of minor consequence. Such a man reverses himself.

The fifth characteristic logically follows from the fourth. If reasoning by its very nature is suspended action, there is necessarily a great difference between it and suggestion. If there is no action connected with the former (except the energy required to think), it is obvious that reasoning carries with it no automatic release in activity, and we may say, therefore, that reason and suggestion are at opposite poles in reference to the very thing for which suggestion is noted.

Figure 13 shows this relationship. A represents the center of the mind, B the background ideas, and C, no action, the logical consequence of the process of reasoning itself.

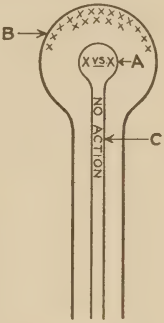

Figure 13.

V. BACKGROUND IDEAS

This class of ideas readily explains itself. It is on the outer edge or in the margin of the mind in which there are degrees of vague attention. It is frequently asked just how many ideas are in man's consciousness at once. The answer is often given that there is only one, but if this were the case, then an individual in his conscious movements would be in a very unsatisfactory condition, to say the least. What the person who gives this erroneous answer has in mind is that only one idea at a time can be in the *focus* of consciousness, although this idea may be very complex. Many ideas may blend together in a unit. But this does not apply to consciousness as a whole, for in the background, though vaguely present, are many ideas.

What are these background ideas for? They are to identify ourselves to ourselves. Without them we would not know ourselves. We would not only not know ourselves, but also we would not know our friends. If the only thing in the mind were the idea in the focus of consciousness, we would not have anything with which to check up on this central idea, recognize it, and properly relate it to any other idea. Our marginal minds keep tab on us, and tell us who we are and what we are doing.

If I am thinking only of a penknife, and there is no other idea in the mind at the time, I do not know that it is a penknife or that I am handling it, for I must have my memories present, even though vaguely, to make this identification. To know what a present idea is in the focus of the mind, I must have enough of my past with me to understand it. Hence the marginal mind. The condition that comes nearest to being a one-idea mind is the hypnotized mind, for in that case the marginal mind is pretty well obliterated for the time being.

So when attending to an idea in the focus of the mind, we at the same moment know that we are male or female; that it is Monday and not Tuesday; that we are sitting or standing; that it is summer and not winter; that we have experienced this idea before; and so forth. All these ideas hover in the background and serve as identifiers of the central idea. They may color the mind and provide a feeling tone. I may be insulted in an early morning hour and then set the idea aside as of no consequence, but I may be in a slight grouch all day without being very much aware of why I am. Some educators call these marginal ideas the apperceptive mass; they serve as a background to interpret the ideas of focal attention. We see, therefore, that these marginal ideas serve very useful functions. But they are never immediately powerful, as are ideas of suggestion. From the above discussion we see that a marginal idea possesses the following characteristics when compared to suggestion:

(A) Its mixture of vague and firm belief
(B) Its vague attention
(C) Its personal interest
(D) Its nonexclusiveness
(E) Its nonautomatic release

In reference to the first characteristic, we know that our belief in these marginal ideas is sometimes pretty shaky and sometimes very firm. At times we are not sure whether an idea in this part of the mind came from our own personal past or whether we picked it up in our reading; whether an idea is true or not; or whether it is practical or impractical. In reference to other ideas in this field we may have a firm belief. We are sure we are ourselves; that a certain course of action is absolutely right; or that the means to secure a certain end is correct. But in suggestion we see no such mixture. We are always and positively sure that an idea is the only right one at the moment and that it is undoubtedly true.

The second characteristic is obvious. The third characteristic is quite appealing. We are often more interested in our marginal than in our central ideas. In autistic and wishful thinking where we let our wishes have full sway, we daydream with these marginal ideas as we pursue our work, and in this woolgathering we often find our greatest thrill. Sometimes the daydreaming is focal and it becomes the only thing we do. It then occupies both the central and marginal mind, and if we indulge ourselves too much in this mental sport, we become impractical and absent-minded. Out of this background mass of ideas sometimes comes the fulfillment of many a fond dream: Inventions are created, books are written, and fortunes are made. All in all, the marginal mass is keenly interesting.

The fourth characteristic needs little explanation. No background idea is in exclusive control, as in suggestion.

There is a perfect democracy among the different ideas.

Since action follows only upon an idea in the center of the mind, unless it be impulse or instinct, the marginal idea has no automatic release in activity, as in suggestion.

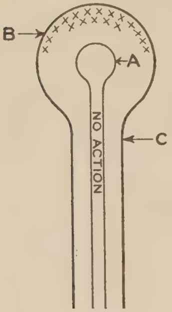

Figure 14.

Background ideas are shown graphically in Figure 14. A, as usual, designates the focus of consciousness, B, the marginal ideas, and C, their withdrawal from the action center. Here we see background ideas that in themselves are apart from practical life, and hence are very different from ideas of suggestion.

A comparison between these different ideas can be more readily made when the characteristics of each are presented in tabular form:

	Idea of Information		*Background Idea*
(A)	Its impersonal aspect	(A)	Its mixture of vague and firm belief
(B)	Its casual attention	(B)	Its vague attention
(C)	Its casual interest	(C)	Its personal interest
(D)	Its nonexclusiveness	(D)	Its nonexclusiveness
(E)	Its nonautomatic release	(E)	Its nonautomatic release

	Idea of Reason		*Idea of Suggestion*
(A)	Its mediate belief	(A)	Its immediate and unquestioned belief
(B)	Its focal attention	(B)	Its focal attention
(C)	Its indirect personal interest	(C)	Its personal interest
(D)	Its nonexclusiveness	(D)	Its exclusiveness
(E)	Its nonautomatic release	(E)	Its automatic release

VI. SUMMARY

1. The immediate and unquestioned belief in an idea of suggestion makes it quite distinct from any other idea.

2. Only the idea of suggestion and the idea of reason have a focal attention, but the latter differs in other respects.

3. An idea of suggestion, being of personal interest, holds common ground with an idea of reason and a background idea, but other features distinguish it.

4. An idea of suggestion, being exclusive, is very distinct in this respect from the other ideas.

5. An idea of suggestion is also distinct because it has an automatic release.

Perhaps the discussion in the present chapter is a little too technical for a book on practical psychology, but it is well for the student to have clearly in mind the special field of ideas, which forms the principal subject of this treatise.

We are now at a point of study where we are able to understand better why suggestion is the strongest force in the realm of ideas. Since its unique features are (1) immediate belief, (2) exclusiveness, and (3) automatic release, it possesses more powerful characteristics than any other idea. An idea of suggestion, being so immediately and unquestionably accepted with no rival, draws upon a great source of nerve energy. All other ideas are expelled from the center of attention. This allows the idea of suggestion to draw to itself the nerve impulse that would be scattered among a series of ideas in the mind when a person is in doubt or has some mental conflict. In other words, suggestion is like the scattered parts of an army concentrating at one point. An idea of suggestion has behind it a greater neurological support than any other idea, and this might explain why it goes into automatic action; why, when someone is under the power of suggestion, he acts in his strongest manner and with direct and immediate attack; why there is no shilly-shallying in suggestion; and why it makes for the most resolute form of idea-expression.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of any ideas that do not appear to fit into one of the four classes of ideas given?

2. Can you illustrate from personal experience the conversion of an idea of information into either an idea of reason or an idea of suggestion?

3. Why do you think we are often more interested in our background ideas than in our focal ideas?

4. Why do neurological forces probably make an idea of suggestion the most powerful form of idea-expression?

VII

SUGGESTION–FATIGUE

Our ideas are transformed sensations.
CONDILLAC

I. INTRODUCTION

In a previous chapter we discussed fatigue due to actual work or distraction—the actual work being either muscular or so-called mental labor, and the distraction being either the main ingredient of a monotonous job or the main ingredient of boredom. Another kind of fatigue now claims our attention. It is not due to actual work, muscular or mental, for there is not enough work to produce it. It is not due to monotony or distraction, for introspective reports do not reveal such states of mind. We shall call this fourth kind "suggestion-fatigue"—due, we think, to the mere presence of suggestion, or an idea having the five characteristics of suggestion.

It should not be strange that suggestion produces fatigue. If a state of mind, such as worry, anxiety, pessimism, or discouragement, can affect the body in an unfavorable manner, it is no more strange that another bad state of mind—a faulty idea—can affect the body unfavorably. If we can produce in the classroom or laboratory by the power of suggestion the smell of heliotrope when none is present, of warmth when no physical stimulus is warm, of pain when no hurtful stimulus is applied to the body, it is a part of the same principle to say that a mere idea can be followed by fatigue.

With a view to testing the possibility of engendering fatigue through suggestion, the author set up certain laboratory tests which indicate two kinds of suggestion-fatigue, which may be called "anticipation" and "memory." From these findings we shall make certain deductions of practical value in the field of mental hygiene. Another kind of suggestion-fatigue may be called "social"; it also has a practical bearing on the subject.

II. ANTICIPATION-FATIGUE

In the laboratory an ergograph arrangement was constructed, by which the subject pulled and released a weight, and the strength, the pauses, and time of such work was recorded by means of levers on a kimograph (a revolving metal drum with smoked paper over it receiving the record). The women were asked to pull a five- and the men a seven-pound weight in this first experiment.

This first experiment was divided into three parts. In the first place, the subject was placed behind a screen with his arm strapped to a board on the outside of the screen and his middle finger in the pulling stirrup and was told that he was to perform a very easy job by simply pulling and releasing the weight for one-half minute. Then he was given a recovery rest of one minute, which in this instance we found to be sufficient.

Then, as a second task, the subject was told that he was to pull and release the weight for one minute, and that the job would be twice as hard as the first. There was no change in the weight, but this fact was not known to the subject.

As a third and last task in this first experiment, the subject was told after a three-minute rest to pull and release the weight until exhausted. Actually the subject was allowed only one minute of work, the same as in the previous task. Again there was no change in weight, this fact also being unknown to the subject.

Figure 15, page 124, is a typical work-graph of the suggestible subject for these three tasks. The three divisions correspond to the phases of the first experiment already discussed.

There is a little difference between the first one-half minute's work of the first task and the first half-minute's work of the second task. The latter shows a retardation of energy, probably owing to the suggestion that the work was to be twice as hard, since in reality the physical load was the same. A more interesting fact is seen in a comparison between the work of the first task with the first half-minute's work of the last task. There is in the last task a very marked retardation of energy even at the very beginning of the pull.

The subject, in his introspective report, said that he felt a lessening of his strength at the beginning of the third task and felt a little tired after he received his instructions, although he reported that he felt rested just before the instruction was given. (One test pull just before the instruction was given indicated that a three-minute wait had rested him, for the stroke was full height, or about twice as strong as the first pull after instruction.) Here we apparently see suggestion in operation. The actual work was no harder in the first half-minute of the third task than in the first half-minute of the first task. The difference was merely in instruction. The idea was entertained by the subject that there was a long, exhaustive job ahead, but this was only in thought and not in actual physical work. Every condition at the beginning of the third task was the same as in the previous ones—the freshness of the subject before the instruction was given, the size of the weight, and the conditions in the room—with the exception of the kind of instruction. The results cannot be accounted for by mental or physical work, for it was the same as in the previous task where no fatigue was indicated. In addition, monotony or boredom did not account for the results, for the subject said that the task was not monotonous or boring. Only the idea in the subject's mind appeared responsible for the results.

Two conclusions may be drawn: First, that when an individual has in mind a long, exhaustive job, retardation of energy takes place at the very beginning of the job with an accompaniment of a feeling of fatigue; in this case, the subject is tired before he begins. Second, that this retardation of energy, as well as the feeling of fatigue, continues in a marked degree, with production very materially cut down and at times reduced to a minimum.

These findings can be readily applied to everyday life. The easy and moderate jobs do not appear to have much ill effect by way of suggestion, but when a job appears long and exhaustive, or instruction is given to this effect, suggestion causes inefficiency of both body and work.

The professional businessman, lawyer, dentist, physician, or minister may tend to think of his future work in a discouraged manner. Every week and month is crowded with affairs of the office. No letup is in sight. Hard work stretches ahead far into the future. The tasks before him seem exhaustive, or nearly so.

The tasks of tomorrow or next month may be no more difficult than those of today, but suggestion plays a part; the future appears difficult, and immediately both body and work suffer. Lassitude is present before the day is begun. Fatigue is read into work before work is started. Hurdles are set up to block the path before the key is put into the office door.

If applied only to the feeling of fatigue, suggestion would not be especially significant, but we have noticed that it applies also to production. With suggestion-fatigue setting up a lassitude, there is also a decrease in output. Some people, therefore, do not do as much work as they can easily do, and not nearly as much as they plan. Suggestion closes the day's work before the maximum output is reached.

Production is not only lessened, but in all likelihood its quality is not as high as it should be. Discouragement, setting in early in the day for long jobs, easily leads to mistakes. The best word may not be uttered to the prospective client or buyer; the best report may not be issued; the best bidding on a contract may not be made; the best advice may not be received; a poor speech may be prepared; the total output for the day may be inferior—all because of a wrong idea.

The foreman puts bad suggestion immediately in the employee's mind when he tells him that a job to be done is very tiring. The workman thinks of it as a more or less exhaustive job stretching constantly into the future. The foreman reduces, thereby, the work in the shop and injects a discouraged spirit in the employee's mind before the latter begins. Industrial surveys have indicated that the best workmen are under the best foremen, and that training should be especially centered upon the supervisor, to teach him to implant the right mental conditions in the minds of the employees. With a good supervisor good suggestion plays a vital part, and with a careless supervisor bad suggestion plays a vital part. Actual conditions are often no worse with the discouraged than with the encouraged worker, but the former *thinks* conditions are worse, and this suggestion produces the bad effect. In industry the main consideration is how the men are treated and not so much what they have to do.

Mothers often put the idea in their children's minds that going out in the world to make a living is a tremendously difficult task. The child looks upon the outside world as a big bugaboo, or as a "big bad wolf." Bad suggestion dampens the child's enthusiasm, and when he faces his first job, he has exaggerated its difficulty. He is already weary; self-consciousness is present; production is not good; mistakes are easily made; and all too soon the victim of bad suggestion may be seeking another job. He may constantly find all aspects of life unnecessarily difficult for him. He has read difficulty and weariness into life in the business world and lessened his own production because he was given wrong instruction.

The youth is told that speechmaking is strenuous and very difficult; that approaching an important person is very hard; that a course of study is far from easy; that he will make friends with great effort; that it is unlikely he will be a leader here or there; and a hundred and one other like instructions are given him. His state of mind is the same as that of the workman who looks upon his job as hard and exhaustive because of the instruction given him by his employer.

In these tasks bad suggestion holds back a person's endeavor. He hesitates to do and to dare; he withdraws his energy, and he tackles these "difficulties" in a half-hearted manner. Bad instruction may be the only handicap of an individual, and yet blame for discouragement and inefficient production is wrongly imputed to him because of a poor estimate of his ability.

The right approach to any individual about a task is to allow him to judge for *himself* whether it is very tiring or exhaustive. More jobs are spoiled by bad suggestion than by actual conditions of the work itself. Even if one man knows that a task is very difficult for him, there is no evidence that it will be very difficult for another. The difficulty of a task is a very relative matter, owing to different abilities and temperaments of individuals. And this difficulty should be discovered by the individual and not falsely imputed to a task by bad suggestion.

If future work seems very fatiguing, a good preventive is to break it up into short units. By this means the future is not a depressing burden, for it then is made easy by frequent pauses.

If the introduction of rest periods in industry is beneficial and a buffer to bad suggestion, it can also serve in an office. Complete absence from the office on a working day is often conducive to the elimination of a bad suggestion that the work ahead is too hard. But rest periods or recreations should be frequent, and long enough to refresh the mind for the return to work. The frequent holidays granted in a country like France or Italy have a good effect. Examinations of students at the end of six-week periods followed by a little rest may eliminate bad suggestion of hard work. The future must be psychologically short if energy of body is to be keenly felt and production is to be highly maintained.

III. MEMORY-FATIGUE

In the next experiment performed in the laboratory, designed to isolate suggestion-fatigue, the same ergograph apparatus and conditions were employed, but with a change in weight and instruction. The weight was changed to four pounds for both men and women. The subject was first instructed to pull the weight for one minute without any further instruction. Then, after a recovery rest of three minutes, the subject was told that the weight would be doubled and that from his own past experience this would mean double effort. Actually, but unknown to the subject, the weight was not raised. Figure 16 is an actual work-graph of a subject for both the first and second minute. Other subjects who were suggestible to this type of instruction showed a similar work-graph. The results of the first and second parts of the experiment are separated in the figure by the line in the center.

We readily see that suggestion played quite a part in what may be called "memory-fatigue"; that, if a task is thought to be doubled in difficulty, it should be more tiring. It was only the *thought* of a task being doubled that made it more fatiguing, for it was *actually* no more difficult than the first minute's work. Here the subject was so much under the power of suggestion that he retarded his energy at the immediate beginning of the second task, and reported a feeling of lassitude which he did not report for the first task. A memory of a task being arduous in the past carried over an expectation of arduousness in the future.

As we see in this experiment, work *itself* should not have tired the subject. Monotony, or boredom, was ruled

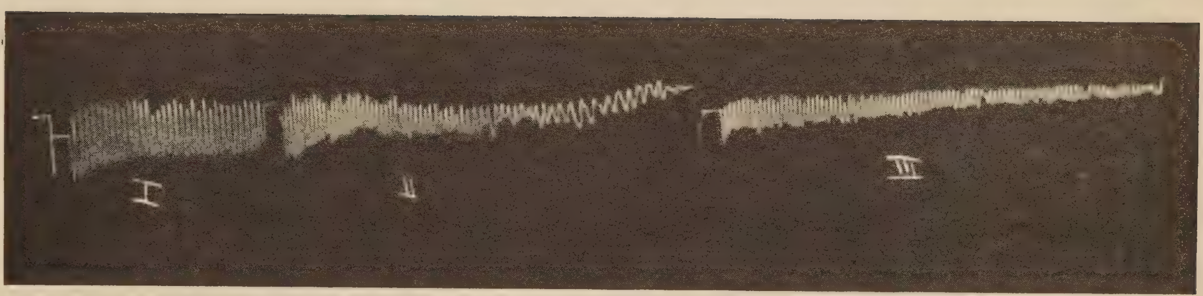

Figure 15.

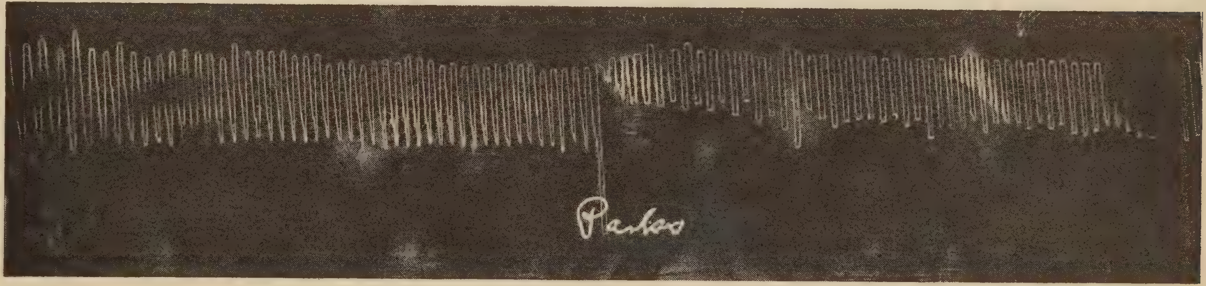

Figure 16.

out, for the subject reported that the experiment was interesting. Only suggestion remains to explain the results.

A. Fatigue-Contagion

The apparent evidence of memory-fatigue in practical life is very common though often entirely unknown to men and women in their daily pursuits.

Actual fatigue from one job is often carried over to another job. Already tired by some really strenuous labor a person may attempt to perform a new task in itself not fatiguing—be it teaching school, fishing, writing a letter, or arranging for an interview. Naturally the new job would be fatiguing for a person already tired before he assumed it. Hence the new endeavor may be taken up again with reluctance, and if taken up, it proves tiring. But the thought of previous fatigue is fastened to the wrong object. It was due to a previous task. Consequently it is not the new task itself which is fatiguing, but only the *thought* of it.

Fatigue is mentally contagious. When a tiring job is followed by an easier one, the latter "catches" a fatigue; it may always be disliked, and an individual may retard his energy in meeting it. The writer even has a dislike for certain kinds of beautiful statuary, for they are associated with tasks which were very burdensome; he also dislikes certain kinds of buildings, for they are linked with tiring ordeals of boyhood.

Fatigue is a big blanket that spreads itself far and wide and covers many an item that sets up a bad reaction, even though it may be pleasant and a nonfatiguing endeavor.

B. Moods and Fatigue

Another kind of memory-fatigue is produced when a first task is associated with bad moods or emotions, such as anxiety and discouragement resulting in fatigue. The work *itself* is not hard, but the bad states of mind lowering the resistance of the body set up a fatigue that we *impose* upon the new task. This is suggestion.

Mrs. A—— is depressed and fatigued because of certain disappointments. She is advised to take an automobile summer trip through a section of the West. But she carries her bad mental states, and their consequent poor effect upon her body, with her. She tries to enjoy the scenery, the gliding along the country roads in a good car, the give-and-take of pleasant conversation with fellow tourists, and the relaxation among the members of her party; yet her mental depression continues. She is asked to take an automobile trip the following summer, but she refuses, even though she is now refreshed and optimistic. The thought of the trip in the previous summer is discouraging. She thinks of it as fatiguing, yet the *trip itself* was just the reverse. The idea of fatigue was transferred to the trip.

A girl starts in her freshman year at college burdened with a heavy schedule of housework. She comes to her classes already fatigued. Even in listening to her history, literature, and other courses she feels tired. She consequently does not like school and complains that it is too hard. The other students, who come to class refreshed, have no such experience. She finally gives up the goal of education, because the task is too difficult. Would she not have had a very different reaction if she had not carried a fatigue into the classroom? She did not realize that she was under the power of wrong suggestion.

C. *Poorly Performed First Tasks*

Another kind of fatigue that is transferred through suggestion comes from clumsily performed previous activities.

Mr. G—— was getting into such straits that he thought he would have to resign from his work or get a leave of absence because of a daily fatigue that was too great to view with complacency. Just at that time he was offered a contract requiring three times more work than he was doing. He did not want to decline the contract, for it was a lucrative offer, but the thought of doing all this extra work actually put him to bed in the middle of the day the contract was tendered. After talking the matter over with his wife, he made up his mind to refuse this extra burden.

But a study of suggestion which he was pursuing at the time helped him. Why should his present work be especially difficult, if others were not tired by it? He began to realize that the trouble lay in his first experience in getting started in his profession. He was awkward, self-conscious, and in need of training and experience when he first took up his life's job.

Everything was poorly done, or nearly so, and this poor coördination of nerves and muscles made him unnecessarily fatigued at the end of the day. The idea was thus unquestionably planted in his mind that his work was very hard, and because of his mental make-up, all subsequent endeavor was performed with more strain than the average man incurs. Because his past work was hard and fatiguing, he expected it to be in the future, and his expectancy was not disappointed.

There was no reason why his present work should be an arduous task, for he had finally developed skill in it. His present endeavors *themselves* were not hard, but he discovered that he read fatigue into them.

After a little re-education he not only did his work with ease, but accepted the contract previously refused, and when under way with the additional work, he felt better in mind and body than he had since the beginning of his adulthood.

Mrs. L—— has developed poise and efficiency in a business which she has established, but refuses a chairmanship of any committee because of the thought of its tiring her. In looking back to her younger days, however, we found that she was embarrassed when she tried to conduct her first committee meeting, with resulting shattered nerves and a heavy dose of fatigue. With her efficiency in promoting business, it probably would be easy now to head a committee. The work *itself* would probably not be difficult, but she carries over a memory that through suggestion makes the idea of being a committee chairman very unattractive.

Mr. S—— is a prosperous businessman. But he never makes a speech. His first attempt, when he was young, was tiring and humiliating because of lack of experience. His control of people through his magnetic personality would probably not make speechmaking very difficult now—certainly not enough to make it a problem. But the thought of his former experience is injected into the present through suggestion. A thought, uncritically accepted, makes him unwilling to face an audience.

Mr. R—— likes to build various little items for his home, such as shelves and tables. He has developed into a good mechanic and even received professional training in carpentry. However, the making of a simple gadget for the home makes him so tired that he wants to give up this prized hobby. Here we suspect that suggestion is playing a part. His first, awkward, tiring attempts at cabinet-making form the basis of the present fatigue; the very expectation of getting tired at such work makes him tired. A re-training of his mind would eliminate this suggestion.

D. *The Neurasthenic and Fatigue*

The symptoms of what is called neurasthenia are well known. Since it is mostly a matter of nerves, there is present a sense of debility, or feeling of weakness. The patient feels moody and depressed. Complaint is leveled at almost anything. The world is too big a thing to meet. A feeling of intense effort unnecessarily accompanies much of what is done. But the prevailing trait of a neurasthenic is the tremendous susceptibility to fatigue. The patient is tired even before the day is begun. As various duties are met, fatigue piles up upon fatigue until the nerves are on edge; irritability is the most prominent state of mind. The day drags on until another struggle and battle are over and a bed is a morbid relief.

We can readily see why a neurasthenic becomes easily fatigued. He makes life unduly hard by running his mind loaded with friction. Neurasthenics are often extreme introverts who never have adjusted themselves to the demands of life. They have created an opposition between themselves and the world. This cleavage sets up a strain of mind and body which easily tires the patient.

But all of this fatigue is probably not due to an actual bodily condition, which may be a little below normal. Much of it is probably due to bad suggestion. A person's realization that he has a weak nervous system and experiences a marked sense of maladjustment makes him too bodily-conscious. He exaggerates the weakness of his body. He fears that his heart is bad; he fears that his liver is in bad shape; he fears that tuberculosis will strike him; he fears that his stomach is smitten with a blighting disease and his eating becomes nothing more than a fussing, worrying, nibbling habit on suspected food. He is continually making his body weaker by thinking too much about it. Too much thought of a bodily weakness makes a patient feel a greater weakness than the case warrants. Unnecessary fatigue is thereby created by the exaggerated thought of a weak body, and this is added to the naturally created fatigue due to a moderately weak body. Many people about us are neurasthenic, or partially so, and tire themselves out by unduly depreciating their own strength.

Such neurasthenics are constantly beset by memory-fatigue. Going to a dance is a task because it was a task last month. Entertaining guests at dinner is a hardship because it was so a few weeks ago. Reading two books through in a week is unthinkable because it was an arduous endeavor once before. Eating is an ordeal because it was such yesterday. Sleeping is tiresome because it was a struggle to sleep last week. The past throttles the present.

Were it not for bad suggestion a neurasthenic could easily throw himself into an activity and enjoy it without much fatigue. Many a present task could be easy if we had no past. There is no good reason why such people should get very tired. Much of this fatigue-affliction is just a habit, a mere carry-over with no present justification—not a matter of work in itself.

The person who worries about his body gives his case away when he goes to a competent physician in whom he has implicit confidence and is told that he is organically sound; that his heart, liver, lungs, stomach, and the numerous other parts suspected of drumming out their last existence are in good shape. He immediately shows new life and for a period goes about his work with ease and success—indicating that he read too much fatigue into his condition.

Then he gives his case away also by suddenly being thrown into a crisis in which quick and decisive action is demanded. Neurasthenics, during the World War, displayed marvelous endurance during hospital rushes and other prolonged and exciting situations. They drew favorably upon their strength because of good suggestion; they disciplined their minds to realize that they *must* and *could* stand the unusual strain of war.

Transfer of learning is a disputed question today, and people misinterpret it entirely; but transfer of fatigue through the sublety of suggestion is a common experience of daily life. Work that in itself is easy and pleasant is impregnated by a thought that it *must* be fatiguing because it was so in the past, and it therefore becomes fatiguing. An "innocent" endeavor is victimized because of the "criminality" of another.

IV. SOCIAL-FATIGUE

An activity may be proceeding very nicely until someone suggests fatigue, and then production lessens. This may be called "social-suggestion."

A workman is absorbed in his labors and feels the zest of work well done, but he notices a fellow worker look at the clock and then he wonders whether it is getting near closing time. Suggestion at this point begins to operate. He loses a little interest in his work. Clock-watching brings on lassitude, while if no clock is present, the pleasantness of labor may extend to the time of the closing whistle.

Girls in offices find their work more tiring and boring when they look at the clock. This feeling of lassitude is of the mind rather than of the body. Clocks are excellent fatigue generators.

Groups playing games, picking berries, cleaning up a yard, or digging ditches feel good until someone mentions being tired. Then the contagion spreads, and activities slow up or cease like a spell of magic. The idea of being tired goes into a corresponding bodily effect.

Instruction is often given to groups to refrain from complaining of being tired because of its bad effect through suggestion. In times of a crisis, such as a flood, when Red Cross workers are strenuously pressed into long and enervating hours of service, the idea of fatigue is smothered, and a substitute idea of endurance takes its place with surprising results. These startling effects are brought about partly by using reserve force but principally by keeping the mind filled with good suggestion.

V. SUGGESTION AND THE WORK CURVE

Mosso[1] has shown that real fatigue, due to actual work, has a typical curve. It is a regular curve with ordinates gradually growing shorter, as shown in Figure 17 (page 132).

But there are many instances of fatigue where the curve is extremely irregular. A subject may start a curve with high ordinates and then suddenly stop. Another will start

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[1] Mosso, A., *La Fatica* (Quinta edizione, Milano, 1892).

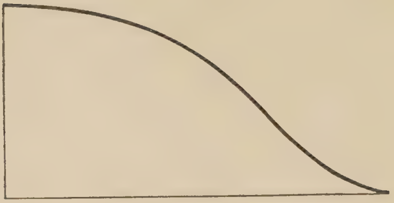

Figure 17.

strong and suddenly show a weakness. Another traces a curve with many variations. These changes are probably due to varying mental conditions. The principal cause is probably a lowered morale, which is mostly suggestion—an uncritical and depressing acceptance of a discouraging idea. Dubois[2] says that the body need not be tired even though the morale is tired. A man is weakened as much as he is convinced he is. The thought of little or no personal strength always carries with it a conviction or belief, and a rapid accumulation of fatigue.

VI. EFFECT OF SUGGESTION ON FATIGUE

Suggestion can very easily follow real fatigue when quite pronounced, and greatly exaggerate the difficulty of a task. Heavy fatigue especially conduces to a discouraged state of mind. Both Tissié[3] and Féré[4] speak of the morbid effects that heavy fatigue creates and the ennui that accompanies it. Since heavy fatigue brings on pessimism, the latter strengthens the already heavy fatigue. When the body acts unfavorably upon the mind, the mind acts unfavorably upon the body. Dubois[5] says that true fatigue is doubled by bad suggestion.

We find, consequently, that the really tired factory worker increases his fatigue by his mental states, as does the tired businessman by the obsessive thought of his weary condition. This is a part of the principle that evil feeds upon itself.

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[2] Dubois, Paul, *The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders* (2nd ed., 1909), p. 129.

[3] Tissié, P., "La fatigue chez les debiles nerveux ou fatigues," *Revue Scientifique*, October, 1896.

[4] Féré, C., "Les troubles mentaux de la fatigue," *Medicine Moderne*, November, 1898.

[5] Dubois, Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

But if bad suggestion can augment real fatigue, then good suggestion can stay it. Dorothy Canfield, in her book *The Day of Glory*, writes of the life of Dr. Girard-Mangin, who served four hundred and seventy days in a hospital in France during the World War, performing operations and caring for the wounded. Many days and nights often passed without sleep, but she toiled on with zest. Occasionally a lull occurred in the fighting and, weary and exhausted, she begged for a room and a bed; yet when she received orders to rush to a new post, her "tiredness went away." The thought in her mind that she must carry on served to allay a fatigue that would otherwise be overburdening. There was no questioning of the military order. The idea of duty set up an unwavering belief to keep going. Not that suggestion creates energy, but it releases the energy that lies dormant when real fatigue burdens the body. James's[6] famous essay on the use of energy in a crisis illustrates the power of suggestion to tap wellsprings of force in the human body.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is suggestion-fatigue possible?
2. Can you recite an incident from your own life where you were subject to suggestion-fatigue of the anticipatory kind?
3. What is the best way to initiate a person to a new job?
4. Give personal illustrations of memory-fatigue.
5. What type of peson is especially affected toward suggestion-fatigue by a discouraging past?
6. Give personal illustrations of social-fatigue.
7. How does the neurasthenic tire his body through bad suggestion?

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[6] James, William, *The Energies of Men* (1926).

8. How much can we reduce fatigue by the elimination of bad suggestion?

9. How often is suggestion-fatigue made a classroom topic?

10. Do you think we are justified in making suggestion-fatigue a new classification?

VIII

SUGGESTION AND SUCCESS

Nothing succeeds so well as success.
TALLEYRAND

I. MEANING OF SUCCESS

No subject is of more interest to every individual than that of success. It is something that strikes home to every mind anywhere in inhabited parts of the earth. It is discussed perhaps more than any other subject—or at least it is given the preference in the privacy of one's own mind.

Because of its universal and deep appeal, a great deal has been written on the topic, but much of it is unsound and speculative. Many writers think success is secured by understanding a certain "law" of life, as though it were derived from a secret kind of knowledge. Others think success is assured by getting in touch with a fortune teller or with a horoscope reader who might gladly promise it for an alluring fee. All of these "imaginative" individuals think that success is some precious nugget of gold hidden in a magic cave, to be extracted by magic.

In addition, much of what is written on success is unsound because it is falsely defined. The most prevalent definition in this respect is that man is successful if he owns quite a good deal of property or has a great deal more money than the average person has. It is probably needless to refute this definition, for it is denied by nearly everybody on second or third deliberation. But it still persists, because people *want* to believe it and thus superficially decree that it shall constitute success. Even educated and cultured people set it up as a standard and feel that they are failures because they do not have an elegant house or fame, and even ingratiate themselves before those who possess a pronounced pile of worldly goods and nothing else.

Naturally, if success is defined in any such terms, then by its very nature it is limited to only a few in comparison with the entire population of a city or state. If limited to only a few, then any treatise on the subject should be hidden so as not to hurt the feelings of the average man, and the psychologist should never breathe a word about success to a general audience.

Then if success is defined in material terms, it is, as society now stands, more or less a ruthless acquisition, for such success presumes and requires a great many people to be deprived of life's gifts and possessions for the benefit of others. As P. T. Barnum said, "There is a sucker born every minute." If success is wealth, then it is often gained by stepping on other people's shoulders.

The most thoughtful moments of life convince everyone that success is not exclusively in terms of concrete goods, even though he may falsely make the latter a god. *Success is simply getting or having got what one wants out of life.* If a man is after houses and lands and gets them, then he is a success. But if another wants to paint pictures and doesn't care whether they are sold or not, he also is a success if he paints well. ✓ If a person is after power and is made superintendent of a large plant, he is a success, but so is the man who wants to be a scholar and is respected for his knowledge. If a man wants to own an outstanding business and does own it, then he is a success, but so is the man who is the kind of a teacher he wants to be.

Necessarily, success depends on what a person wants, and since we all want in various ways, we find that success is a very relative thing, so success can be defined both in terms of the intangible and the tangible. There are, hence, many successful people who are unknown. They too are accomplishing something. Some washerwomen are successful; some millionaires are not. Success is not necessarily defined in terms of fame.

Our definition of success makes it more democratic. Success, thereby, belongs or can belong to all men. It is taken out of the ranks of the favored few and given also to the average man. Success may then be more easily secured, in fairness to all. One man need not be placed in a subordinate position to given another a chance to succeed. The relative meaning of success gives the psychologist a chance to talk about it to the average man and to a general audience. It then belongs to the public.

Success, not necessarily meaning the possession of worldly goods, throws a greater responsibility upon a man himself, for the getting of what he wants depends very much on his attitude; whereas if success is defined in terms of wealth, it does not matter very much how a man runs his own mind, since fortunes have come to some people without any effort, irrespective of the kinds of minds they possess. Society merely dumped money into their laps.

A correct definition of success depends to a great extent upon how a man thinks, and the explanation of this point is the theme of the present chapter.

II. CAN MERE THINKING OF SUCCESS EVOKE SUCCESS?

How can the mere thinking of success aid toward its consummation? To some people this is an odd query, for they say that if one has only business sense, and circumstances are fortunate, success will naturally come. The mere thought of success, they say, is a useless bit of mental gymnastics and has no connection with actual, practical success. It is not so much what a man thinks that counts, but what he does, it is claimed.

And yet books, magazines, teachers, lecturers, and platform promoters are covering the country with a certain kind of optimism that proclaims that all success is only a matter of thought. "Think hard enough and success will be your reward." "Think success and it will come to you." "Concentrate on the *idea* of success and it is already assured." The writer a short time ago attended a lecture by one of these sugar-coated inspirers who made the astounding statement that all the members of his audience would be making a fortune at the end of two weeks (the close of his lecture classwork) if they only would wish it. The author's regret in recalling the situation is that he failed to heckle the speaker by asking in a stentorian tone, "How?" "How?"

No balanced, thinking individual will be misled by such a Pollyannish species of optimism, even though there are thousands of persons ensnared by these thinking fads.

But is this type of gushing, sentimental thinking one hundred per cent wrong? Its exponents maintain that they have good authority for their statements; that they can even point to certain established psychological principles for the basis of their teaching. This is partially true. But, as we shall point out later, they grossly misunderstand and exaggerate. The kernel of truth on which they claim to build their edifice is suggestion. These irrepressible optimists are disseminating a miserable distorted psychology. Yet it is an essential and fundamental fact that merely thinking success *helps* to bring it about, even though it does not produce it. Success needs the right kind of suggestion. While this truth may not inoculate the old, established businessman or woman, it should be of service to the myriads of youths who are now dreaming of success.

III. REASON INTERFERES WITH SUCCESS

If success is helped by the type of thinking called "suggestion," we must ask, What place has the use of reason in promoting success?

It might appear strange to the student to read the words of the heading of this section, for he has been told with the finality of law that the greatest thing in the mind is reason. Reason is the last word of brain power, he thinks. It is thought to be the god of academic procedure, and if a man's act is honestly labeled "reasoned out," how could anyone have the temerity to question its value? The Middle Ages with its trend toward scholasticism made the study of reason the very "Queen of Science." And this has become a tradition, until it is now thought that an act cannot receive the highest appraisement unless it has come through the grinding mill of reason.

People, therefore, have difficulty in giving the proper proportional values to other phases of the conscious mind. This devotion to reason does not mean that people actually employ reason as the controlling potentate in their lives. This is far from the case. Preaching and practicing reason are two very different factors.

These reason-worshippers may be surprised if they are told that reason is not the most important element in our lives, and is even an intruder and interferer in many respects. In fact, it may rightly be said that reason ruins more than it saves. He who does not reason, it might be said, is lost; but it can equally be said that he who *does* reason is lost. In what respect? In respect to the great field of success and to other fields which shall be discussed in subsequent chapters. In these realms of activity, reason does more harm than good, and, startling as it seems, reason is keeping more people from success than leading them to it.

When it comes to the future, there is no room for reason in respect to certain topics. If a man were *to reason* about the prospects for his own success, for instance, he would find himself getting deeper and deeper into a fear of failure. No man can justify his expectancy of success on the basis of logic. Reason always throws up obstacles to success. It never clears the road.

A. We Like to Alibi our Fears

The future is an unopened book, or better still, it is an unexplored cave with the entrance a dark and entangling door. It requires bravery to enter. Fear grips the human heart and holds man frozen to the present. Somehow there is an instinctive fear of the future. Its uncertainties make it appear strange, and we are afraid. If we knew that only the old and the tried would occur, there would be no trepidation in facing the future.

The young person, and even at times the older person long established in business, looks upon his success as something only in the future. It is yet to come and, consequently, it partakes of all of the uncertainty and strangeness of the future. He often does not want to predict. He alibis and justifies his fears. He reasons that he has a perfect right to fear the years to come. Calamities might befall him, he says. He also might not have good health; enemies might plot against him; an accident might cut off his usefulness; a fire might destroy all that he would accumulate; there are too many competitors; business is too much of a cutthroat matter; a depression might smash his one chance to succeed—these and other bits of rationalizations are introduced. He often refuses to venture into and prophesy about his future; he prefers to drift along and wait for difficulties to strike him. There is hardly a person who cannot give perfectly sound reasons for his not becoming successful. This is done either consciously or unconsciously. Very often the latter is the case. Always some supposed obstacle or circumstances can be found to stand like a Rock of Gibraltar across his path. Of course, a fear of the future is unreasonable, but we defend it and make it appear reasonable by a show of alibis that we think justify it.

Further, sooner or later we may come to believe our own alibis. Constant repetition of an alibi is dangerous.

We know that in the field of business the repetition of an advertisement often leads to conviction, even when the reader was at first rather opposed to the product advertised. It is not a different principle when we offer a weak excuse for not venturing into a new task, only to find (after constant use of it) that the excuse is uttered with such earnestness and sincerity that we are duped by mere repetition into believing it. Excuses might turn into truths as far as our feelings are concerned.

When this point is reached, we are unable to help ourselves. We are then bound to stick to the old whether it is bad, troublesome, or depressive. Nothing new is tried to pry loose the imprisoned mind. Self-help is out of the question and only an explosion from the outside can shake our minds loose from the bonds of suppression.

B. Abilities Discounted

✓ Most of us set a poor estimate upon our own abilities. Only a few people are blessed with a confidence that rides laughingly through any storm. We are too much saturated with the success of others, and in this devotion we easily lower our own confidence, or continue to maintain a lack of it.✓ Childhood is generally to blame for this. Habits of non-self-reliance often cow the child. His elders hold a whip over him until he feels like a poor, driven animal. Does he look up to himself? No! He has learned to look down upon himself. His childhood habits decry his own powers. They draw a curtain across his future, and he hesitates.

These habits of non-self-reliance are offered as excuses for a supposed lack of talent. Reason rises majestically to defend "poor abilities." A man can very easily find an excuse for not expecting excellent results of himself.

Moreover, discouragement tends too often to make us put the blame on ourselves instead of upon outward conditions where it at times belongs. Even an earthquake might take away not only our business but also our confidence in our qualifications for success. Or something else independent of a person's control might happen—an epidemic of illness, a financial panic, a competitor who paralyzed his enterprise—and yet he may tend to think that something is wrong with himself. Here, excuses are again ready to fly to man's aid to justify his failure.

C. *Reasoning Prevents Adventure*

We often find that a man prevents himself from becoming successful because he thinks too much. One argument for a thing is counterbalanced by another. He wants to try something new to bring him success, but he always finds this or that point to consider. He wants to start a business, he wants a raise in salary, he wants to change his job, he wants to change his life to a marked degree and enter into a new field of endeavor, or into a new profession; but he is afraid to venture because he is too strongly caught in the deadlock of reasoning. He is about to make the plunge, but finds an objection to it. He is always caught between two ideas when he wants to adopt new plans to bring him success. He does not act firmly and quickly.

So reasoning, if indulged in too much, may block a promising future. It may offer us little help for the future. It may depress rather than exalt. It may discourage rather than encourage. It may kill new activity and make us pause. *A man may not nourish but impoverish his hope by reasoning.* Here is one sphere where logic may not be the "Queen of Science."

IV. HOW SHOULD WE LOOK UPON THE FUTURE?

How then should a man think about his hope for success? Reason is dangerous. Should he act then by impulse? No! For this too would not be wise. It would

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be a matter of feeling and nothing else. Pathetic mistakes might be made. Blunders might delay progress. Pure feeling by itself is a bad guide; it is like the blind leading the blind.

Moreover, when it comes to expecting success, a person generally does not act from impulse. A confident attitude toward success works more through the head than through the heart—a point to be explained in a later chapter. It is what goes on in the brain that makes a man hope for success rather than what goes on in the feelings.

The question of how a man should set his mind on success leaves but one answer, and that is suggestion. Let us first treat of the possible attitudes that may be adopted optionally in respect to the future. There are only three of these. A man may look forward indifferently, pessimistically, or optimistically. We shall omit from our discussion the other alternative of a mixture of these attitudes. In discussing these three, we want to show that each one is a matter of suggestion, that in the last analysis there must be only a matter of choice of one or another kind of suggestion in respect to what is to be expected of the future, and that naturally the best suggestion should be adopted.

Before discussing indifference and pessimism in relation to suggestion, it is well to point out a faulty assumption which each of these attitudes adopts. A fundamental weakness in the indifferent and pessimistic positions is that they make a man assume either consciously or unconsciously that the world itself is indifferent or pessimistic. It might rightly be asked just what is meant by an indifferent or pessimistic world. The world in this case is thought to be something independent of the mind. But this is false and unscientific, because the only thing independent of the mind is physical and chemical force, and surely material forces cannot be indifferent or pessimistic. A first course in psychology will teach any individual that the only stimuli that affects him, strictly speaking, are in terms of light waves, air waves, mass energy, and so forth

—just the things the natural scientist talks about. Where then *are* indifference and pessimism? Are they really in the world or in our own mind? Naturally, they are just products of the brain. Indifference and pessimism are only a *person's reactions*, or meanings which he places upon life. So, when a person says that life or the world is indifferent or pessimistic, and implies that it is something independent of him, the reaction is really *his own product* and the child of *his own making*. It is not something objective which he can observe and condemn. He makes his own indifference and pessimism, and then projects them into outward conditions, but forgets that he does it. He might say that he cannot avoid such a reaction because of actual trouble, and so forth, and it is the same thing as thinking that indifference and pessimism apply to conditions independent of man. But man's mind is not a *copy* of what he calls circumstances. It is always a *reaction to* circumstances, and man determines his own reactions no matter what the circumstances are. A man can be optimistic in the face of trouble. A state of mind is not what is *received*, but is a *reply* to what is received. And, of course, this goes for optimism.

V. SUGGESTION AND INDIFFERENCE

A man may argue with himself that it is best to assume an indifferent attitude because he does not know anything about the future. Plans go awry; even the desires of kings and queens are frustrated. If a man is indifferent about the future, he will never be disappointed, it is said. The "no-use" attitude is stoutly defended by the strong arm of reason. But indifference is mostly suggestion. When a person attempts to defend his indifference by the steps of logic, it is generally a rationalization, or covering up of a bad condition with a false excuse. The condition of indifference is present long before there are attempts to justify it by reasoning. It is perhaps the easiest attitude for people to adopt without deliberation. They just fall into it without thought. It has always been the greatest hurdle to progress. The great wall of indifference must be broken down before anyone can become progressive. It is suggestion that makes indifference very hard to move. Merely accepting indifference as a matter of course has embedded it very deeply in man's nature. If he at first had reasoned it out, it might be an easier thing to eliminate. Why we face the future so indifferently through the power of suggestion is a little difficult to say. It might be due to our habits, which hold us content with things as they are, and unconcerned about plans for tomorrow.

A. Indifference Closes Mind to Opportunity

Since indifference is mostly a matter of suggestion, does it justify itself? There is a very definite and clean-cut answer. Indifference is never justified as suggestion. Even when plans are knocked into smithereens a man should not become indifferent. Why? *Because he finds more in the future with a ready mind than with an unready one.* Opportunity does not come rushing like a tidal wave when a person is indifferent. Opportunity is not something independent of the mind; it is always relative and depends upon an attitude. A prospect greeting an indifferent mind is not an opportunity. It is simply nothing and has lost its power. Half of opportunity is what is already in a person's mind. Opportunity may make a man, but it must first have a mind to work upon. So an indifferent individual cannot make opportunities. If he succeeds, it is just a coincidence because something is thrust his way. He thus cuts himself off from the opportunity of making his life a success.

B. Mind Is Disorganized

Then no matter what the future obstacles, it is always better to have a planful than a planless mind. A plan or a purpose is the only thing that will provide an effective expenditure of energy. It is the only thing that will organize the mind. We have insulated wire and other control equipment to provide an efficient expenditure of electrical energy. Otherwise electricity could never be harnessed. Similarly, without a plan the mind cannot be harnessed. A plan is, hence, the efficiency medium of the mind; it is the indispensable condition for progress. Every indifferent person has a planless mind, and it is no wonder he does not succeed. An indifferent person cannot succeed just because of his very attitude.

Although plans may be frustrated, a man with purpose may still be efficient. He may think clearly; he may have the zest of organized living and the thrill of working toward objectives. Then all of his plans cannot fail. It would be a miracle if a person were found whose every plan failed. The planful mind is, therefore, more efficient and always gains in contrast to the indifferent mind, which always loses.

C. *Indifference Grows Heavier by Its Own Momentum*

Any idea once started grows stronger just because it has been started and continued. An indifference toward the future, consequently, breeds a greater indifference. It doubles and trebles upon itself as it proceeds. This is a law of habit. An indifferent individual finds himself deeper and deeper in his attitude until it engulfs his whole being. All that a habit needs is a start, and its own momentum adds weight and strength to it like a rolling snowball. An indifferent person finds the world more and more indifferent, and the result is a further and further removal of a chance to succeed.

D. *Indifference as an Automatic Release*

Then indifference as a matter of suggestion goes most powerfully into action. There is nothing to hinder the idea of indifference from *automatically* going into behavior.

An indifferent person acts indifferently before he knows it. What of this?

Soon the indifferent individual naturally drifts into indifferent situations. Nothing that he can do reveals any hope. His own state of mind colors all that he meets, and his actions color them a still more unattractive hue. Expression of a state of mind reacts on the mind and makes it stronger. Expression makes for impression. The best way to accentuate an idea is to express it, and a person under the bad suggestion of indifference is not exempt from the application of this principle. His indifference grows worse by his acting an indifference. He cannot help showing an indifference, and further he cannot help loading his mind with more indifference. The consequence is that indifference—the very source of his difficulty—blinds, by mind and act, pleasant and alluring prospects. It is not that opportunities could not exist for him; it is not that fate takes success from such a mind; it is not that the future has no brightness; it is that he puts on a gray pair of glasses and makes *everything* look indifferent.

E. Like Creates Like

In the next place, we generally give back to any person what he gives to us. An indifferent person, because of his mental state and strongly indifferent behavior, invites indifference from others. We are very accommodating in this way; it is a psychological law of action and reaction. Only a few good Samaritans try the opposite method. We seldom see a person go out of his way to help an indifferent individual. On the contrary, we tend to push him along in the direction in which he is traveling and even say, "Yes, there is no use in setting any hope in the future," although this is rather to agree with him rather than with ourselves. We are too polite to disappoint him.

The result is that friends are prone to offer him no prospects. So he blinds himself to real opportunities by his own state of mind and action, and then induces his friends to cover up prospects that might be ahead of him. Both he and his friends cover the world with a cloud and say there is no vista. Indifference for the most part is not a *result* of failure to see opportunities. It is a *cause* that closes the door.

Is an attitude of indifference toward one's own future justified? If an indifferent person does not meet opportunity, but even shuts it from view, how can he be a reliable authority and say that life has no bright sunrise?

VI. SUGGESTION AND PESSIMISM

Pessimism, like indifference, is mostly a matter of bad suggestion. There are few individuals who reason out their pessimism: Schopenhauers are very rare. It has been said that trouble makes people pessimistic, but this is not generally true. Discouragement, of course, follows upon trouble, but this state of mind is not necessarily pessimistic. In discouraged minds there is at least a great *desire* to find progress and success, and a hope for better prospects. Discouraged people see something worth while in life, but they are set back in attaining it. In the pessimistic mind, on the other hand, there is no or very little desire for progress, and little or no hope for a good future. Pessimistic people do not even see anything to live for. Thus there is a tremendous difference between discouragement and pessimism.

We find that pessimism is mostly a matter of temperament, and suggestion is based upon it. A pessimist often hasn't any real trouble to justify his state of mind. It is often said that pessimists are just naturally contrary and refuse to see any good in life regardless of the extent of their troubles. They are so by disposition; they do not attain this mental state by the process of reason. Of course, the pessimist when cornered tries logic to provide a reason for his condition, but this is rationalization. He is pessimistic long before he attempts to bring logic to his rescue. His attempt to argue about the future has no foundation; it is merely an afterattempt to explain his attitude. No one can prove what the future will be, for it is the proverbial closed book whose pages can only be opened by one with omnipotent hands. Even if a man's personal pathway has been strewn with misfortune he cannot by any rule of logic conclude from this that misfortune will continue. (There are, unfortunately, a few exceptional cases, such as people inflicted with an incurable disease.) Of course, it is equally true that we cannot dispel the coming misfortune and usher in by logic a pleasant, happy future for the individual. We see the futility of reason in proving or disproving coming misfortune. It cannot prove or disprove a calamitous future. There is not anything we *know* of the future that warrants pessimism. We can take the future only on faith. No matter how we consider pessimism it is only a matter of suggestion.

Since pessimism is a matter of suggestion, we shall discuss the injurious results that stamp it as unjustified:

(1) Pessimism blocks opportunity. As in the case of indifference, it also hinders opportunity, for a mind shut to prospects cannot see them when they are present.

(2) Pessimism prevents unity of mind; it disorganizes the mind, for there is too much opposition to the world resulting in strain and poor functioning.

(3) Pessimism adds to itself; it grows by its own momentum, just as indifference does, and a man sinks deeper into pessimism just because he started in it.

(4) Pessimism is turned into behavior; it leads inevitably to pessimistic behavior because of the automatic effect of bad suggestion. This in turn accentuates pessimism. It kills enthusiasm. It lowers a person's abilities, for how can a trait be seen at its best with a doleful mind behind it? It brings about strain and stress in the nervous system, for the pessimist is always carrying a chip on his shoulder and is instantly ready to fight, "crab," and censure. Nature is thus violated, for the mind is supposed to function in

unity. This dissension is bound to dissipate one's energy because the mind cannot be in a continual fighting mood without paying a costly penalty. This loss of energy means a loss of health and strength. Fatigue sets in too early, and the day's program is thus cut short. Illness frequently results because of a low bodily tone: a weakened body makes a man very susceptible to disease germs, and the pessimist may have his years cut short. A pessimist is also inefficient; he may be the worst bungler in the world. He may spoil miserably and pitiably any opportunity that comes his way. The pessimist, therefore, ruins his chance by his own effort to succeed. No organization wants a pessimist to control it. He becomes a victim of his own state of mind.

(5) Pessimism invites pessimism. As with the indifferent man, so with the pessimist: we are very polite, and think and act toward him as though the world were actually the way he thinks. We just don't want to be rude. We even sit and moan with him because it is very difficult to inspire him and even to inspire ourselves when in his presence. But this is again the old psychological law of attraction. Like attracts like, and pessimism attracts pessimism. It is just as contagious as any other state of mind. We push the pessimist in the direction in which he is going; as he is going "down the ladder" we give him a shove. So he is treated to his own medicine, and this further cuts off his chance of becoming a success. Friends throw very few good things in the path of the pessimist.

VII. SUGGESTION AND OPTIMISM

We come now to the last possible attitude toward the future man may choose. Nothing is left but optimism if a person is to adopt a justified attitude. The indifferent man cannot justify his position and neither can the pessimist; both bury themselves in the mire which they themselves have made.

But even though the optimistic attitude seems the only thing left, is it worth developing? Can the psychologist justify a type of optimism about man's personal future without making it seem rather wishy-washy?

Optimism is also largely a matter of suggestion. Those who are easily optimistic are "naturally" so. It too is dispositional, and a man does not find himself in this state because logic has put him there. He is optimistic long before he tries to reason about it.

It may be said that prosperity makes for optimism. It is obvious that good business will make for a good spirit, but if one is dispositionally indifferent or pessimistic, his prosperous feelings may be only skin-deep. At the least sign of distress the prosperous man may fall back into his previous state of mind. If at times prosperity does come to the indifferent or pessimistic, this point might contradict our contention that indifference and pessimism stand in a person's way. But when prosperity comes to the indifferent or pessimistic, it is not a personal reward, but something that has come in spite of the state of mind. Society has earned their money for them.

The optimistic individual derives confidence from good suggestion. He doesn't know *why* he feels so confident. He finds himself submerged in a faith in himself without any thought about it, whether he is prosperous or not. Buoyancy and hope are his natural endowment. He never questions his own ability; he feels that he has a right to expect success and that is all there is to it. He is never troubled with a single doubt about it. When asked to justify his own position, he thinks the question is out of order. If the optimist should attempt to bolster his optimism by reasoning about his feeling, he would be merely trying to dress up his natural optimism with logic. Then reason is also worthless as an aid to determine whether we are going to be successful. It can't prove that a man will be successful, for the future has not yet given data upon which to base conclusions.

A. Optimism Discovers and Makes Opportunity

Since optimism is also a matter of suggestion, can it justify itself? In the first place, optimism prepares the mind to see opportunity. If pessimism or indifference closes the mind, optimism opens it in respect to opportunity. Optimism is the mental condition that makes opportunity possible, for, as we have learned, the latter is as much mind as circumstance. If the mind does not recognize opportunity, it does not exist. It is very true that in a sense success is a "set-up" for some people. Such persons find created either consciously or unconsciously for them a situation which needs only their presence to spell success for them. They are the ones whom Walter B. Pitkin says are "kicked upstairs." These few are "lucky" pawns.

But the optimist can easily create opportunity. He is not under the delusion that success is some treasure hidden around some corner. He creates it. John D. Rockefeller made his own success by making his own opportunity to sell oil. Thomas Edison made his own success by making his own opportunity to create world-changing inventions. John Jacob Astor made his own success by making his own opportunity to set up a remarkable fur trade in London and in other parts of Europe.

It is interesting to note that optimism raises a man's efficiency regardless of circumstances. The mind and body function smoothly and harmoniously. We think better and clearer when optimistic. The body is actually raised in tone, irrespective of outward conditions or whether we have only a quarter or a fifty dollar gold piece. This fact indicates very clearly that optimism is created in our own minds. Man can master his attitudes because they are his own reactions. Since he can actually raise his bodily tone by an optimistic state of mind even when circumstances are against him, we see the value of a good state of mind. To function smoothly in mind and body gives us a feeling of well-being and a satisfaction regardless of outward events. If a man deprived of all material advantages is stimulated by a feeling of well-being, he can avow that life is worth while without any help from environment. Only optimism can furnish such a benefit.

B. Optimism, an Organizing Force

✓ Optimism is a great organizing force of the human mind. If indifference results in a planless mind, and pessimism produces a mentality racked with tension by constant opposition, optimism has the opposite effect: it brings the energies of the mind to focus in a common endeavor in spite of external forces. ✓ Optimism acts as a coördinator of the various aspects of the mind and enables them to function in a very effective union.

An optimist naturally does things better than the indifferent or pessimistic person, for his mental machinery is functioning well, even though his circumstances might not be any better. Keeping the mental machinery in excellent trim merely to meet the demands of the day is alone a justification for optimism. If I can do anything better, whether it is reviewing a book or hoeing my garden, even though actual success has not come to me, by being an optimist, then optimism earns a place for itself as a proper state of mind.

We are also warranted in saying that if pessimism lowers a man's bodily efficiency, optimism raises it. A buoyant mind is as great a force in building up the body as physiological forces. Pessimism smoothers ability; optimism uncovers it. Pessimism weakens; optimism strengthens. Pessimism hastens fatigue; optimism retards it. Pessimism dulls thinking; optimism clears it. Pessimism badly affects the circulatory system; optimism helps it. Pessimism lowers resistance; optimism raises it. Pessimism badly affects digestion; optimism accelerates it. Pessimism may destroy the metabolic balance; optimism may restore it. Pessimism badly affects respiration; optimism aids it. Pessimism retards even muscle activity; optimism hastens it. The pleasant mind indicates a well-tuned body, and a well-tuned body is the first prerequisite for efficiency. If we are right in assuming that mind and body should function smoothly, just as a plant or a tree, then pessimism is unnatural, and optimism is the natural state of mankind.

C. *Optimism Propagates Itself*

Optimism grows by being exercised just as indifference and pessimism do, but it is a very desirable growth. The more one maintains an optimistic state the more deeply rooted it becomes. It develops into a habit-asset which is constantly enabling a person to approach his opportunities with a unified mind. It is a constant support in crises that generally unhinge the indifferent or the pessimistic.

D. *Optimism Has an Automatic Release*

An optimistic state of mind, promoted by suggestion, automatically goes into action. An optimist not only thinks success, but acts it. This expression reacts in turn upon the state of mind that made it possible, and strengthens its own cause. The more optimistic a man acts, the more optimistic will he feel. He is, then, readier in both thought and act to meet whatever comes. Thus, since optimism in itself is a mental readiness to make the best use of time and opportunity, it is better able to meet circumstances than indifference or pessimism. Whether a man moves up or down depends predominantly upon his state of mind, unless he is one of those whom society has "kicked upstairs" without his effort, and optimism proves to be the best mental condition to meet the world.

E. We Push Along the Optimist

Just as we ignore the indifferent individual and do to him what he does to himself; just as we shove the pessimist "down the ladder" and do to him what he does to himself; just so do we push an optimist "up the ladder" because that is what he is doing to himself.

We throw more things into a full than into an empty lap. We always help the optimist. We come to him to head our committees, stage campaigns, and tackle promotion jobs, while the indifferent person and the pessimist stand gaping on the sidelines wondering why they are not successful. Friends thus tend to make an optimist a success. And yet it is because of the optimist's own state of mind that friends help to make him successful. He attracts success because that is his state of mind. Two men go into an office to ask for a job—one an optimist, the other a pessimist. Everything else being equal in the way of health and ability, who would secure it? You already have the answer.

"Nothing wins like success" may apply to the man already on the high rung of the ladder. John D. Rockefeller, Sr., said that the task of being successful is in making the first thousand dollars. When a man is successful he travels fast. But in an equally important sense this applies to an optimist who is not yet successful. A man may become successful by acting *as if* he is. Opportunities are handed him through the boosting of friends. By the law of attraction his optimistic mind draws to his side the help of others.

F. The Ultimate Value of Optimism

But what if the optimistic mind should meet nothing but a black, empty night? What if earthly years ahead should bring only "vanity and vexation"? What if the invisible forces should hold a catastrophe for the human being in the sphere beyond the bounds of earth? Could the skeptic still win. No! For even though the years might bring sorrow and calamity, the optimist has lived well in the meantime; he has tasted the thrill of existence, and has radiated its joy. Who can deny that even should calamity finally strike the optimist, something has not been gained? What if a soldier knew for a certainty that a battle was going to be lost and he would sacrifice his life? What would be the best attitude to adopt? Should he die like a coward or die like a hero? What would be the sporting thing to do? He would, of course, profit more by meeting death with a valiant bravery than with a cheap, weak attitude. His honor and self-esteem, at least, would profit, and these perhaps are the final values. The person who faces his own personal future optimistically is profiting regardless of the end.

VIII. CHOICES OF THE FUTURE COMPARED

We have examined the three possible attitudes a man may adopt toward the future. He must adopt one of them because success or failure depends upon it. Each one turns out to be suggestion, but indifference and pessimism are bad suggestion. As a faulty state of mind, indifference (1) hinders opportunity; (2) disorganizes the mind; (3) grows by its own momentum; (4) leads to indifferent behavior; and (5) invites indifference. As bad suggestion, pessimism (1) hinders opportunity; (2) disorganizes the mind and lowers vitality and efficiency; (3) grows by its own momentum; (4) leads to pessimistic behavior; and (5) invites pessimism. As good suggestion, optimism (1) discovers and makes opportunity; (2) organizes the mind and raises efficiency; (3) grows by its own momentum; (4) is strengthened by its own expression; and (5) invites others to promote it.

Which should be the choice? As far as proof of future success is concerned, there is none. Nothing remains but to take the future on faith. It is a leap in the dark no matter which attitude is adopted. Each being a matter of suggestion, no one of them can cast its beam of light into the future and reveal the facts. Since man's attitude toward the future is just taking a chance, then, why not take the best chance? Even the gambler at Monte Carlo takes his best chances.

What is the outcome of each of the possible bets about the future? If a man is indifferent, he makes a poor bet, for it usually turns out to be a loss. He forestalls any chance of winning because of his lack of initiative. If a man is pessimistic, he also makes a poor bet, for it too usually turns out to be a loss. But if he adopts the optimistic state, then it is a bet that has an inevitable winning power. He will be bound to receive at least five benefits, even if no actual success comes to him. There is *always something to gain* in being an optimist, but there is *always something to lose* and little to gain when indifferent or pessimistic. If we must decide about the future as a venture, why not choose the attitude which will assure inevitable gain?

IX. OPTIMISM, ONLY A PREREQUISITE

The reader may feel that it is needless to devote a whole chapter to success and suggestion, especially since we have said that those who are confident about the future are so because of suggestion. Why, then, have we urged the adoption of suggestion in respect to expectant success? Because, while there are some fortunate individuals who find it easy to fall into an optimistic attitude, there are many who fall just as easily into a pessimistic or indifferent attitude.

The present chapter, therefore, was directed especially toward those who are indifferent or pessimistic toward the future. Let them deliberately adopt good suggestion in promoting an optimistic attitude. It is the only course to pursue if they want to *prepare* themselves for real and actual success. There is no other way. Reason and impulse will not help, as we have shown. To those who find it hard to expect success let the plea be made that they plant the optimistic attitude in their minds by suggestion. Let the idea of coming success be unquestionably accepted—with firm belief. Let there be no argument about it, no interfering with it in any way. Let it rest in the mind in perfect faith. Let them be vitally concerned with the idea, keep all rival or competitive thoughts away, give it the exclusive right of control. There is no force in the world that can prevent this idea from becoming an automatic response, and thinking in terms of success will reap at least the inevitable five benefits, even if actual success does not immediately appear. Of course, the old habits of bad suggestion will have to be overcome with vigilance and effort, but the fact that they have been overcome by many people shows that good suggestion *can work*.

Are we guaranteed actual success by maintaining optimism? No! Not by any means. In ages past it was thought that a person had only to wish for a thing and he would get it. If that were true today, we all would be like the king who had only to think of a river turned to silver to have the water transform itself into running riches.

But such superstition and miracles do not belong to sane thinking. We cannot control outward events sufficiently to guarantee success to every man. The mistakes of other people, the condition of the stock market, sickness, accidents, floods, and earthquakes are independent of man's control. Circumstances go one way while the mind goes another. In some far-off day the human mind might perfectly control circumstances, but until that millennium arrives, success is not *guaranteed* to any man.

But if we are going to try to meet outward conditions, the best attitude to adopt is optimism. A mind burdened with indifference or pessimism cannot bring to circumstances the proper state of mind to insure actual success should circumstances be propitious, unless he be an exceptional individual who is blessed through no effort of his own. The mind that does not have the proper attitude makes opportunity null and void. So optimism, through the power of suggestion, while it does not guarantee actual or real success, is a necessary *prerequisite* for it, should outward conditions be favorable. It is the mental offering in a partnership where man himself furnishes part, and circumstances the other part. Suggestion is the gateway to success if the latter is ever to come by our own efforts.

The present chapter has dealt mostly with what is called "auto-suggestion" since it is principally self-originating, although it may be inspired by another. The attitude towards success must be made our own if it is to be effective.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is wrong with many of the success fads sold on the market?
2. What would have to be the condition of the world if *mere thought itself* guaranteed actual success?
3. Why does optimism justify itself?
4. Why does pessimism condemn itself?
5. Why does indifference condemn itself?
6. Do you think that a man can change his temperament to instill a new attitude of optimism?
7. Why is the common definition of success a faulty one?
8. If the common definition of success is true, what hope has the average man to attain success?

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IX

CONDITIONS OF SUGGESTIBILITY

Ideas often flash across our minds more complete than we could make them after much labor. LA ROCHEFOUCOULD

I. HOW CAN AN IDEA OBSESS THE MIND?

THE average person would be astonished to know how much of his life is under the power of suggestion in one form or another. In the field of religion, man is mostly, and at times entirely, under the sway of direct suggestion. In the great field of social intercourse, suggestion, direct and indirect, holds the upper hand. In business, almost the entire field of advertising holds its power by the force of direct suggestion. In the shop and office, countless appeals are made to workmen through direct and indirect suggestion. In the attractive field of the search for success, most of the seekers are influenced by the power of suggestion. In the stupendous and bewildering manner of conducting a war, the great weapons are not the machine guns but bullets of the mind hurled at people through suggestion; this can be seen in propaganda and in the building up and sustaining of morale. It is suggestion in one form or another that is one of the controlling factors in the entire order of society.

So extensive is the power of suggestion and so often does it affect our lives that it is very appropriate to ask. How can an idea obsess the human? How can an idea so control consciousness that it becomes a kind of a person itself acting independently of man's will and many times against his wish? How can the mind that creates ideas become a slave to its own creation? What is it that puts man so much under the sway of an idea? There are at least fifteen conditions of suggestibility which explain how an individual comes under the great power of suggestion. In many instances this control is not injurious, but beneficial; in others it is a detriment and a very serious obstacle to development. These conditions we shall discuss in the following order: (1) ignorance; (2) prestige; (3) fatigue; (4) temperament; (5) emotion; (6) repetition; (7) illness; (8) mental blankness; (9) love of scandal and success; (10) age; (11) momentum of habit; (12) sex; (13) friendship; (14) effect of leading questions; and (15) permanent judgment of personal worth.

II. THE DICTATORSHIP OF IGNORANCE

√ If ignorance were an innocent or negative state of mind, then it would be a comparatively easy problem to overcome. But it is a great deal more than an innocent or negative condition; it is one of the most positive and can be one of the most dangerous forces in the world. √ It is what people are ignorant of that determines to a great extent their suggestibility. People are inclined to believe unquestionably what they first hear about a new subject. This is only natural, for there is no experience to check on this first information. When the mind is ignorant in regard to a certain subject, it may be wide open, and fully receptive. The first bit of information that a man gets on any subject tends, therefore, to be planted in the soil of his mind entirely unobstructed. When it comes to brand new ideas, we find it easy to become mere "babes in the woods." It is only when we gain a knowledge of a subject that we begin to question some of its ideas, or even have a desire to question them.

The innocent, empty mind of the child receives most of its ideas from parents, teachers, and others through suggestion. Its ignorance makes it a willing servant of all kinds of ideas, many of them leading it into attitudes and habits that spread their destruction throughout life. And children are suggestible to ideas from people not even gifted with prestige,[1] and the power of the first information on a subject is not, therefore, a respector of persons. If the first thing a child hears about poverty is that it is a disgrace, then it may automatically engender a behavior of inferiority when he finds himself poverty-stricken; or if told the reverse, he may hold his head high even when he is on his last crust of bread. If the first thing a child hears of a certain religious faith is that it is wrong and should be shunned, then in years to come he may automatically look upon the exponents of this faith with an unconscious dislike. If the first thing he hears about clothes is that they make the man, then through the years to come he may automatically think in exaggerated terms of the power of clothes; or if told that the man makes the clothes, then he may unconsciously have a corresponding idea about wearing apparel. If the first thing he hears about a Republican (or a Democrat) is that he is a disgrace, then he may always hesitate to sit down at a table with his political opponent even though he may consciously feel ashamed of his attitude. If the first thing a child hears about a foreigner is that he is a stranger and should be looked upon with distrust, then in his adult years he may find himself keeping a suspicious eye upon anyone born and reared on foreign soil.

It is the first idea heard about a subject that tends to bend the mind in one direction, because it is dropped into ignorance ready to receive a new idea without check. Furthermore, it is implied in the study of Otis[2] that there is a slight negative correlation between intelligence and suggestibility. This means that there is at least some tendency for one to go up as the other goes down. If intelligence is high, suggestibility tends to go the other way; if suggestibility is high, intelligence may not be so high. If this is so, then the child may have a degree of suggestibility in accordance with a certain degree of intelligence. If a child is bright, it would have comparatively little suggestibility. But a child of average intelligence would have a rather pronounced degree of suggestibility. The first information on a new subject to the average child might, therefore, find a very acceptable response.

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[1] Aveling, F., and Hargreaves, H. L., "Suggestibility With and Without Prestige in Children," *British Journal of Psychology*, 12: 53–75 (1921–1922).

[2] Otis, M., "A Study of Suggestibility of Children," *Archives of Psychology*, No. 70 (1924).

But the power of ignorance is confined not only to the child. Look at its effect among adults. Witness an audience in a church taking in new information conveyed by the minister. Witness the innocent and ignorant stare as students in our colleges and universities hear for the first time a theory of economics or history. Witness the gullible crowd at a circus as it hears for the first time about the capture of the new wild man from Borneo, or sees the new human freak with twenty legs. Witness the gullibility of even intelligent men as they are taken in by new worthless bonds and gilt (less) securities. Witness the medicine man as he mounts his soap box and note how his audience receives his declaration that a certain new potion will cure mumps, rheumatism, corns, bunions, tonsils, warts, carbuncles, indigestion, and the gout. See the gullibility of the housewife as she hears for the first time of the marvelous workings of a new household invention; the newness of a subject may give it entirely the right of way. This is probably the reason why fads quickly come and go, why the magazines, newspapers, and general public change so quickly from one topic to another. The newness of a thing makes it attractive because it falls upon a public mind that hasn't facts enough to check its reliability. Every psychologist knows that it is a great risk to offer either the adult or the child their first information about a subject.

A very serious problem is not so much in overcoming ignorance, *but in the manner in which it is done.* Faulty first ideas of a subject are too often planted in the adult mind, and of course in the child mind, with little regard for its tremendous susceptibility to first ideas. The entire program of education is open to the danger of furnishing information with no carefully planned, guarded means of imparting the first and new idea of a subject. It is always the first idea of a subject that is the most important. It is always the first teacher rather than the last one who sets the child's mind. Bad suggestion through ignorance will never be overcome unless we become well aware of the power the first idea of a subject has upon the human mind.

III. PRESTIGE

Another powerful condition of suggestibility is the awe and wonder surrounding the various objects and people about us. We never question the qualities ascribed to them; we take them at their face value. Anything with these characteristics has a ready entrance into our minds. It would appear to be sacrilegious and insulting to question the power of prestige. It is no mere incident that promoters of a new cult work up a paraphernalia of dress and ceremony to give it prestige. This overawes the devotee, and the ideas of the cult are accepted on their face value and belief in them is unquestionably established. It is no mere accident that the courts of kings and queens are dressed in regal splendor. It creates prestige for the government and makes its subjects susceptible to its dictates and laws. The power of prestige is naturally mustered up by the faker who comes on the stage dressed in his turban and oriental robe and is introduced as though he were an emperor; he would make very little money dressed in a business suit.

One of the greatest sources of prestige that makes the individual very suggestible is the extension of the belief of divine revelation to secular folk. There was developed in the author right from the very beginning of his school days a rigid belief in the awe and wonder of books. He entertained the idea that every word in every book was absolutely correct; that a false idea, half-truth, misrepresentation, or prejudice was never disseminated through the printed page. A printed work, even though secular, was sacred to him. Consequently, for many years everything that he read was believed with utmost faith, with not the least desire to question a single sentence. And even today he has to train himself with effort to consider an author merely as a human being who might present a one-sided representation. Not until our teachers destroy this belief in the infallibility of the printed word will the students in our schools stop being mere mental hoppers into which information is poured.

Authority is another prestige maker. He who has the final decision on a matter is easily endowed with the power of suggestion. We are all brought up, therefore, to feel that authority, because of the prestige, can do no wrong. We are made to feel that it has behind it the tremendous force of absolute rightness. All authority is more or less regarded as infallible, and a definitely announced decree to this effect is not necessary.

The most powerful way to perpetuate an institution is to clothe it in authority, and then its ideas fall on suggestible minds. It is very risky when institutions turn over the making of decisions to the rank and file of its members. Democracies allow human minds to make decisions out of respect for a love of initiative and liberty, but an institution wobbles a little when its thinking is done by *everybody*. What would the military institution be if its decisions were put up to the private? Authority is a magic way to instill suggestion and secure prompt action.

Great personalities have a way of creating their own prestige. We seem to feel that they have an unusual insight into life and know its secrets. We look upon them, therefore, with awe and wonder. We feel that they are more right than we are because of this insight, and it is, consequently, difficult to question an idea uttered by these individuals.

Prestige of books, authority, and personality is one of the prevalent means of keeping the human mind from ever questioning.

IV. FATIGUE

Suggestion feeds very easily upon fatigue, and mostly in an injurious manner. When the tissues of the body have spent much of their force, this low ebb of strength paves the way for a rapid and extensive development of suggestion. The mind is then too tired to think. Reason is rendered quite powerless. The latter requires a very restful set of nerves and plenty of energy. While it is said that a philosopher does not consume as much energy in pondering out a solution of a riddle of the universe as the maid who cleans his den, it requires more composure and a far greater reserve of energy. Fatigue puts deliberation to sleep as well as the body.

Fatigue is a condition that disorganizes the whole brain. The mental drives are weakened. Our old habits are often too tired to keep going. The very common daily skills are obstructed, and we find ourselves when very tired groping and not doing well the very thing we are accustomed to doing. The positive nerve pathways are choked. A man accustomed to make a good address may be a failure on the platform if very fatigued; another, accustomed to dealing with figures, may be muddled if too weary; and another, accustomed to reading a novel through in one day, may not cover one fourth of the book if burdened with fatigue. We appear tied up in the very things that constitute our daily skills.

But we also know that not only the positive pathways in the nervous system are choked by fatigue, but the restraint is lifted from the inhibitory centers of the brain and we do what we do not want to do. We unloosen a tirade of anger; we boil with irritability; we plan unwise policies; we let drop a careless word; we lower our vigilance and commit grievous errors.

So in fatigue we do not do what we want to do and should do, and we do what we do not want to do and should not do. It is not surprising that the deliberative or considering mind is not present in marked fatigue. How can it be otherwise when deliberation requires a controlled and organized mind? This being the case, fatigue is a very fertile soil for a very rapid susceptibility to ideas. And these are generally not healthful or beneficial. Fatigue is thus a great deal more than a mere resignation from constructive mental activity—more than a mere loafing. It is a condition that makes bad ideas very infectious. They steal into the mind when it is too weary to be alert. What a penalty man pays for fatigue, especially in its pronounced stages!

During moments of weariness we form beliefs impossible in a well-conditioned body. We are ready for bad suggestion. An economic depression grows worse; a little fear grows into a big fear; a little speck of a cloud turns into a black night; a slightly difficult task becomes almost insuperable; strength is weak; ambition lags; burning purposes turn to ashes; and the world is the worst possible place in which to live—when one is very fatigued. We consent to poor schemes and grant injurious concessions when tired. A borrower might do well to wait upon a man's fatigue. Mary gets her automobile and John his trip to Europe when Dad is dulled by the wearing of fatigue. It is wise never to hold important conferences, to make serious decisions, to grant weighty concessions, or to pass a judgment on the world when in the throes of fatigue. The mind is off guard and too much like the mind of a mere child.

On the other hand, a person might be susceptible to an excellent idea by way of suggestion when fatigued, for the fatigued mind may be as susceptible to good ideas as it is to bad ideas. So when a tired man wins the day with an excellent idea planted in his mind by suggestion, it is not because of the wisdom inherent in the idea, but on account of his susceptibility.

V. TEMPERAMENT

A person's feeling-habits—the array of feelings which he constantly displays to the public—constitute his temperament. ✓These feeling-habits can offer a very strong condition of suggestibility if they belong to the type who wears "his feelings on his sleeves." The doors of such minds are always ajar. Suggestion is their permanent means of housekeeping. They are the perennial "yes" people and twist with every turn of wind.

Just why this type is so suggestible we do not know. It might be that the friendliness of those in this category makes every idea conveyed from another seem freighted with friendliness, to be accepted with utmost faith. Their warm hearts make the world warm, and people are trusted. There is also a native optimism in this kind of person, and this makes for confidence in what others may offer. Or there might be a biological rather than a sociological explanation. Feelings work fast and sometimes furiously in these people, whereas consideration of the pros and cons of a question is slow. They are impatient with deliberation. Feelings, with them, far outstrip the reasoning processes. The nervous system sets too fast a pace for checking up carefully on the value of ideas. But whatever the explanation, the person whose heart is constantly exposed is as suggestible as a child.

VI. EMOTION

✓It is very easily seen that suggestion has full sway when a person is under the spell of an emotion.✓ James[3] many years ago said that we tend to believe anything that accords with our emotion of the moment. ✓ If a youth is in a state of ecstasy, he will readily accept ideas without question that further that emotion; but he will fail to harbor ideas that are not in accord with the emotion. The same principle applies to adults.✓

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[3] James, William, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), p. 576.

If a person is irritated, he will easily believe anything that is of an irritable nature, and will not entertain opposite ideas. If falsely told that John interfered with well-laid plans of an organization, he may seize upon this statement with blind faith. If falsely told that Jane is continually careless in keeping appointments, he may not question it. If falsely told that Harry will plot against him, he may instantly believe it. Speak of anything that has disturbed him or might do it, and it will feed his irritation. Tell him on the other hand that John did not interfere with the organization's plans, that Jane is not lax in keeping appointments, that Harry will not plot against him, then he will tend to react through negative suggestion and will not want to believe the statements. Objectionable ideas easily turn into suggestion in the mind of an irritated person.

If a person is angry, ideas in accord with that anger are also readily believed. If falsely told that his enemy made another nasty remark about him, there can be no doubt about his believing it. If falsely told that a person who did him an unintentional injury has a very bad disposition, there is little checking on the idea. If falsely told that certain people are planning a campaign against him, he may accept it as gospel truth. If told the opposite, he will want to follow the line of least resistance and not believe it. If a person wants to make another his enemy, whether for a good reason or not, all he probably has to do is to say a disagreeable thing to him when the latter is in a state of anger.

If a man is caught by fear, he will readily believe anything that plays up that fear. If he is afraid of life, afraid of undertaking an adventure, afraid of taking a chance, afraid of braving danger, he may mentally swallow any statement to the effect that the world is plotting to annihilate him. If he is afraid of an audience, he may be floored by any discouraging remark while addressing a group of people. If afraid of death, he may tend to accept unconditionally any pessimistic report about it. He will find it very difficult to believe the opposite.

If a man is under the burden of grief or sadness, his mind is very susceptible to any idea that describes life as a vale of tears. If he is seized by jealousy, he will easily believe anything about the object of his jealousy. If he is disgusted with a situation, his mind may be set for ideas, however false, that further criticize the situation.

All emotions are fertile soil for a full play of suggestion, and everyone should be on special guard when under the spell of an emotion. All final judgment should be suspended at such times. Emotion greatly disturbs both body and mind, and deliberation is sidetracked. Suggestion then tends to have a clear right of way. Bad suggestion probably has a greater effect upon a person when he is under an emotional influence than when he is in any other state of mind.

Moreover, an emotion entirely controls both body and mind while it lasts and will not easily tolerate, as it were, another type of experience. It, therefore, will not easily permit an unbiased consideration of a topic. It is too greedy in its control to allow anything else to occupy the center of attention. It follows the all-or-none policy. It will feed upon only that which will make it grow and that is the emotion itself or that which fits into it. It is easy to see why emotions are very difficult to master.

VII. REPETITION

The effect of repetition on the human mind is quite odd. It is so often the basis for truth, or what one thinks is truth, that we are prone to answer Pilate's famous query as to what truth is, with the word "repetition."

It might be said that almost the entire appeal of advertising is through the subtle force of repetition. Thousands of products are bought with no consideration of actual merit, but only because the constant repetition of the advertisement has made the mind of the reader open to suggestion. The author has found himself praising a make of car simply because there was constantly hurled at him the demand to buy it. There is no great secret in the force and power of advertising. Repeat an advertisement often enough and many minds will finally yield and not a single question will be asked. ✓ "Repetition is reputation." ✓

Let an individual repeat a disparaging remark about another, and soon it may be accepted without any consideration. Many mothers repeat a trivial criticism of their children until it is taken very seriously. Some people, after repeating criticisms which others have made of their friends, find after a while that they believe the criticism themselves. In fact, many falsehoods are accepted as true just because they have been too often repeated.

It is easily seen how an individual deludes himself with the "mesmerism" of repetition. In a discouraging moment he says to himself that he has little ability, that he has few friends, that he has very little leadership, or that people work against him. The discouraging occasion passes, but the idea having been lodged in his mind, he may repeat it until it becomes a final truth for him, despite the fact that at first he uttered it merely as a temporary and not as a final statement. Many persons have lowered their abilities just because they kept repeating a disparaging idea about themselves, which was certainly not intended as truth for all times.

Repetition does not always lead to suggestion the first few times. Objections may be present. I may object to a certain make of car. A friend may not accept the criticism of another. A child may not believe the disparaging remark made to it. An individual may know at first that a certain idea nursed in his mind is not sound. How proudly we defend our self-esteem! But repetition is a patient sufferer. It plods on quietly and subtly, and soon it may become a hidden and silent battering ram, breaking down all objections. The idea then enters the mind as a conqueror with nothing to oppose it. Perhaps repetition determines truth as much as reason itself.

VIII. ILLNESS

✓ It is well known that illness, or a general state of ill health, offers excellent soil for both good and bad suggestion.

But good suggestion in such cases can be easily induced by those with prestige. The physician, realizing this, takes advantage of the opportunity and plants excellent ideas in the mind of his patient. As he enters the sickroom he radiates cheer and optimism because of his usually excellent dress—physicians may dress well as a matter of pride, but they also do so for a good effect on the patient—his buoyant walk and carriage, and his pleasant speaking voice. Furthermore, his statements to the patient are often designed to induce suggestion: The sickness is never as bad as the patient thinks; recovery will come soon; a medicine will have an excellent effect (even though it may be sugar pills); and other statements of hope designed to boost the morale of the patient. A unique opportunity for creating an excellent state of mind in the patient, often without a single argument or objection, confronts the physician. How different from the reaction of the healthy individual, who often stands ready to differ with the physician! Of course, many people are under suggestion to the physician when well, and statements are accepted wholly on faith, but it takes illness to make people more receptive. It would be a psychological benefit to thousands of people if they suddenly became ill: their minds would be docile and they would be ready to learn some excellent principles of living.

People other than the physician, such as an expert natural scientist, a man with a high reputation as a statesman, or a member of the family whose judgment is highly respected, can also suggest excellent ideas to the patient, but they must have some prestige. It is surprising how often patients listen with childlike attention to an expert whether he is, or is not, an authority in respect to our ailment! The sick are too ready to accept unquestionably ideas that accord with their feelings, and it takes the prestige of the physician or others in authority to break down this tendency.

It is unfortunate that an ailing person is equally receptive to bad suggestion. He may easily believe the worst that can be said about him. He may, therefore, become a victim of his own mind. His ill health is bad enough, but he makes it worse by his own suggestion. Many people who are chronic complainers often have only themselves to blame. The immediate physiological cause of their illness is past, but they prolong it by a bad state of mind. Bad food might upset a person's stomach, or a too hasty meal after a severe illness might disturb digestion. This upset might naturally continue for days, but after that it would disappear if the mind did not interfere. In a following chapter we shall deal more fully with the question of the mind producing bad bodily health through suggestion.

IX. MENTAL BLANKNESS

A peculiar state of mind open to suggestion is called "blankness." It is not what is commonly called "day-dreaming," for the latter is entirely too active in comparison. While woolgathering, the mind is far from vacant: myriads of ideas float through the mind, but without aim or a directing tendency. This blankness is, of course, not literal. The mind can never be entirely empty of ideas if a person is conscious; there are always a few flitting through it.

However, the so-called blank mind comes as near to emptiness as is possible. In this condition we still have a few ideas, but they are as inactive as though we had almost stopped thinking. A "baby-stare" in the eyes is always a sign to others of the blank state, and the subject himself feels that his mind is about as motionless and fixed as his eyes.

Just exactly what produces this state is not known. It might be fatigue, although it comes without fatigue very often. Or it might be due to a special kind of relaxation. But whatever its cause, the mind is then very prone to suggestion. The deliberative faculties seem to be slumbering. An excellent opportunity is here offered for suggestion to work, but too few people take advantage of the situation and adopt good suggestion. This state may be akin to that experienced immediately before a person falls asleep. Good attitudes could well be established if every person planted an excellent idea in his mind during this state. Many people read poetry just before retiring so that helpful ideas may be the last to dwell in the mind just before sleep and thus automatically have a beneficial effect. Others read splendid proverbs and advice for the same purpose. Since the blank mind seems to be similar to the state of mind just before retiring, good suggestion may be just as fruitful for the former.

X. LOVE OF SCANDAL AND LOVE OF SUCCESS

It is well known that a love of scandal is almost a common trait in human beings. Those who no longer succumb to it have had to school themselves against it with difficulty.

Let a scandalous whisper be sent to a listening ear and suggestion is on a holiday spree. The recipient's mind loses its reasoning and questioning ability for the time being. It appears to accept the "news" with alacrity and a thrill. Seldom is there a checkup on the scandal. "How do you know this is true?" "Can you furnish evidence?" "I do not believe it"—these words are seldom put to the scandal-spreader.

It is consequently very easy to ruin a political candidate with rumors of scandal even though there is not a whit of truth in them. And political opponents have not often spurned this method to ruin a rival. Seekers after another's position have often resorted to trumped-up scandal to run the rival out of office. Those "burning up" with jealousy have often manufactured scandal to ruin the object of their wrath. These unscrupulous individuals know very well how a statement of scandal is accepted unconditionally.

The reasons for this universal tendency to love scandal, and consequent suggestibility, are not known. The psychoanalysts have attempted to answer it by saying that people love to spread and to accept statements of scandal because they like to drag the other person down to the level of their own shameful tendencies, which Freud says he finds in all individuals, even in the innocent child. Since corruption loves company, scandalmongering is followed as a means of furnishing this companionship, it is said. But whatever the cause, man is no longer a reasoning creature when the ear is open to malicious tales.

But strange to say, the opposite is also true. We also love to hear of the marked success of our fellow men and we easily accept the news on perfect faith. How the mind tingles when we hear of the rise in the world of an acquaintance, and even of one whom we do not personally know. It might be due to a very personal reason: we might see in such news a hope for our own eventual success, for it has been observed that those with burnt-out ambition, killing discouragement and failure, do not thrill at the news of others' success.

The play of suggestion in hearing of the climb of others to the pinnacle of prominence is evidenced when it is discovered later that this or that person has not been successful. They are often found instead to be merely plodding along in the ordinary way. And even after making this discovery it is difficult to drop our belief in their supposed success. Furthermore, suggestion clothes individuals with a greater success than is actually attained. We idealize some people; we build their pedestal higher than it is, and it is difficult to lower it.

Peculiar indeed is this inconsistency in human nature, the unquestionable love of both scandal and success.

XI. AGE

At both extremes of life, among children and the aged, suggestion is very rife. The child is open to suggestion because he is too young to employ reason very effectively, and, as we previously said, the child is prone to accept on faith the first statement on a topic about which it is completely ignorant.

The elderly person has a weakening of reason because of the weakening of the body. Reason requires good health. The exception is the fortunate old man or woman who is in excellent strength with reasoning still fully functioning. Many old people are as difficult to influence through suggestion as vigorous, middle-aged individuals. But it is quite common for "friends" of the old to mislead them in making unwise gifts, or in unwisely changing a will. Law courts are filled with such cases. It is said in such instances that duress was used, but nothing is forced when the old are misled through suggestion, for suggestion is an easy and unobstructed functioning of the mind. It is true that established habits are hard to break in the old. A dyed-in-the-wool Democrat or Republican would not be influenced by suggestion to change his party affiliation. And in many other ways the mind of the aged is set like concrete. But when they have not previously formed rooted habits and opinions, they may easily become as children. Every man may repeat his childhood.

XII. THE MOMENTUM OF HABIT

The momentum of habit is perhaps the most troublesome and the most widespread cause of suggestibility. Naturally, a man is very much open to suggestion when an idea accords with his habit of thinking. If he is accustomed to think of himself as inferior, suggestion will easily feed this thought. He will very readily believe anything about himself that is discouraging. If he is accustomed to think of himself as a poor leader, suggestion will easily feed this thought, and if someone says he *is* a poor leader, the statement is accepted almost happily. If he is accustomed to think that life holds very little for him, suggestion will also feed this habit, and if another conveys such an idea, he may even be glad to call him a philosopher.

On the other hand, if a person is accustomed to think that success awaits him, suggestion of success-opportunities and techniques will feed this set way of thinking. Such a person readily drinks in ideas that nourish this habitual opinion of himself, and he will easily fall into a disbelief, or negative suggestion, when contrary ideas are conveyed.

The individual who has acquired a bad set of thinking habits offers casework to the psychologist, for he is often a victim of bad suggestion. He may read books on mental growth and efficiency, attend psychology classes regularly, hold consultations with the psychologist, take a course on the meaning and significance of the various kinds of suggestion; but he does not get very far. He tries to rehabilitate his mind, but he becomes discouraged. In his dark moments he asks and even pleads: "How may I build up a healthy mind?" But he is blind to the real difficulty. *He does not want to adopt the healthy mind.* True, he consciously proclaims his earnestness and sincerity in seeking to acquire a new mental outlook on life, but he is not aware that unconsciously his old habits of thinking are pulling him away from the new outlook. And this tug is stronger than his conscious urge.

It is not only stronger, but it carries with it a stronger appeal, for we love more the smugness of an old habit than the urge of a new one. Consequently, in a very real sense he does not want to change. His unconscious contentment with the ease of old habits supplies this disinclination to change. The conscious desire is not appealing enough to overcome it. So, odd as it may appear, the individual seeking a realignment of his thinking habits consciously wants a change, but he unconsciously does not want it.

What then is such a person to do? He must *first know* of this unconscious disinclination, and second, he must overcome this disinclination whether he likes it or not. He generally does not fulfill both of these conditions. He is often instructed in the real cause of his difficulty, but he does not realize that a mental rehabilitation is a difficult task. He thinks that psychology is a magic wand which when held over him can produce wonders overnight without any or very little exercise on his part.

But a man with bad thinking habits as a result of bad suggestion has no royal road to a new mental horizon. Good suggestion does not come easily if it must battle old established habits of thinking.

XIII. SEX

Only a few definite surveys or tests of sex as a condition of suggestibility have been made, but they indicate that women are more suggestible than men. Hull[4] discovered this, as well as Aveling and Hargreaves and Bramwell.

The conclusions are not surprising, for they are the common expectancy of the laymen. Our interest, however, lies in the explanation of the condition. Why are women more suggestible? Strange to say, no definite answer has been given. The usual reason is that woman has been forced to be the weaker sex by commands and arbitrary control of men and, consequently, they have been forced to accept their position without question. Accordingly, they adopt the child's attitude of unquestionable obedience. But this explanation does not suffice for the women who have not been brought up to feel that they are members of the weaker sex.

The probable cause lies in their high-strung nervous systems. Since women are more emotional than men, it is relatively more difficult for them to employ reason, and hence unchecked ideas might find a place more readily in their minds.

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[4] Hull, C. L., *Hypnosis and Suggestibility* (1933), pp. 78–81.

XIV. FRIENDSHIP

There is very little critical questioning of ideas when two friends are together. The closer the friendship, the quicker the agreement. Often there is too much suggestion. They might be merely "yes men" in respect to each other's ideas. Consequently, close friends might not be sufficiently critical of their mutual proposals and might not follow the wisest course. But, because of this unusual mutual receptivity of minds, excellent ideas can be planted in a friend's consciousness under the splendid power of suggestion. A friend might be induced to follow a certain desirable line of conduct just because he is a friend. Friendship and the critical spirit do not easily fraternize.

This condition of suggestibility could be utilized by the employer in fostering bonds of real friendship between himself and his workmen. Excellent ideas for efficiency could then be given the right of way by suggestion, and both parties would be free from the critical eye of mistrust and opposition.

XV. EFFECT OF LEADING QUESTIONS

If I am approached by a man who says, "Well, you are looking very well today, aren't you?" I may straighten up and smile with the impulse and immediacy of suggestion. If I should be greeted with a comment on my poor appearance, however, I may automatically drop my countenance and say "Yes, I am not feeling so well." Leading questions are barred in court just because they tend to put the answer into the witness' mind that the attorney desires. This is taken as influencing the witness. In cross-examination, however, it is presumed that almost any tactics may be employed to break down the witness' story, and the influence of leading questions is, consequently, not forbidden. Leading questions, if very effective in court, should be very effective in our daily relations, but people do not avail themselves sufficiently of their power. For an employer to say to an employee, "You can do this piece of work well, can't you?" would be more effective than if he said, "I believe you can do this work well." For a mother to say to a timid child, "Jimmie, you are just as smart and talented as Johnny, aren't you?" would be more effective in having him straighten up with determination than if she said, "Jimmie, you are just as smart and talented as Johnny." The latter might work by suggestion, and it often does, but the mind is more influenced to act immediately, and without argument, by a leading question than by a declarative statement, which is comparatively milder in effect.

XVI. JUDGMENT OF ONE'S WORTH

If a student has a poor estimate of his own ability, as we shall discuss in detail in Chapter XII, he is already under the power of bad suggestion, and it is difficult to put good suggestion in his mind. He is more suggestible to bad than to good ideas. If I say to him, "George, I'm afraid you can't do this job," he is more liable to say "Yes, that is right," than if I say, "George, you are capable of tackling this proposition." The old estimation of himself is the strongest thing in his nature, and it has to be replaced by a positive idea of his worth before he will easily and readily accept ideas of aggression and accomplishment. If a man already has a fine positive idea of his own worth, he will not readily accept ideas contrary to this belief. Everyone must be started on the right mental road before he can improve.

Suggestion fights suggestion. Belief fights belief. Therefore, a poor belief must be broken down and right thinking established before good suggestion can have much effect. Good suggestion feeds upon good suggestion. Bad suggestion feeds upon bad suggestion. Here is an apparently unbreakable deadlock. If it is difficult to break down bad with good suggestion, how is one to get started with good suggestion? Attention will be given this problem in Chapter XII. Suffice it to say here that bad suggestion can be eliminated by re-education, which turns the mind in the right direction.

XVII. CONCLUSION

The present discussion has indicated that all people are suggestible. But this does not necessarily mean that every person is suggestible in all situations. A person may be very suggestible to "sucker schemes," but in other respects he may be far from suggestible. In testing students it was found that both boys and girls were suggestible in respect to their hobbies, but in some situations were not suggestible at all. An individual may unquestionably accept an idea in accordance with his attitude, or with a certain sentiment, but be very critical in other respects. The make-up of the individual's traits, together with his particular manner of training, naturally makes him suggestible in some situations and not in others. An introvert is not suggestible to situations that would find a susceptibility in the extrovert. A person devoted to the rural community in which he has been reared may be suggestible to ideas concerning it, and not to ideas concerning urban life. An emotional individual may be suggestible to emotional situations and may not be influenced in nonemotional situations. Individuals[5] react to various situations differently. It is well to say that there are suggestibilities in an individual instead of a single trait of suggestibility.

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[5] Brown, W., *Individual and Sex Differences in Suggestibility* (University of California Publications in Psychology, Vol. II, No. 6, 1916).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is ignorance a negative state of mind, that is, a mere nothingness?
2. Why does prestige make a person accept an idea uncritically?
3. Why may fatigue be a risky condition to incur?
4. How may feelings prevent reasoning?
5. Why are emotion and reason incompatible?
6. Why does repetition lead to suggestion?
7. Why is illness a letting down of deliberate abilities?
8. Why do people like scandal through suggestion and also news of success of an indvidual?
9. What is there in habit that makes deliberation or reasoning about it difficult?
10. Why do you think women are more suggestible than men?

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X

INDIRECT SUGGESTION

Each mind has its own method.
EMERSON

I. TELLING PEOPLE OF THEIR FAULTS

One of the most difficult problems in controlling and influencing of people is to make them cognizant of their faults. Most people do not know the extent of their weaknesses and are, therefore, continually getting into difficulties. But if mistakes, inefficiency, and unhappiness are to be eliminated, people must be warned about their bungling conduct. How to do it is the question. Direct open criticism will not do, for every person resents it, and the result is more harmful than beneficial. It is said that the very best way to turn a friend into an enemy is to tell him what is wrong with him.

Why do people resent open criticism? Is it because they do not want to know what is good for them? No, for everybody wants this kind of knowledge. Or is it because people are just queer and won't accept criticism? No. It is not a peculiarly unexplainable trait. There is nothing secret or mysterious as to why all of us resent criticism. It is true that we have been taught as a matter of tradition that we should be men and women enough to see the wisdom of gladly and willingly accepting criticism. But this is an invalid tradition. It is not human nature to accept criticism. A perfectly sane reason exists for people resenting criticism. It is not just moral perversity. People are eager and anxious to know what is good for them, but they want to know *in the right way.*

A very important psychological principle is violated when one person openly criticizes another. One of the most fundamental and important needs and conscious wants for every man, woman, and child is to feel a sense of self-importance as we have said. Without this, human life would be meaningless. A proper sense of self-esteem is the very foundation for all improvement, and for any and every degree of contentment and happiness. The violation of this principle is responsible for thousands of warped and thwarted lives. This principle is the secret to all human endeavor. Naturally, anything that trespasses upon its sacred precincts is wrong.

We can easily see why direct, open criticism is and should be resented. Through it the individual is degraded. He is made to feel humiliated and to have a very poor estimate of himself. *A bigger thing is, therefore, at stake than the fault in question when a person criticizes a fault—namely, a person's own sense of worth.* He forgets his fault when criticized and does not, therefore, apply the criticism. His attention falls upon the more important issue—the blow to his pride.

But the violation of this principle of self-importance is not readily seen by the critic. He is often too busy reveling in a sense of overlordship while criticizing another. A motive of helpfulness may be present, but mingled with it is often the motive for mastery.

Another difficulty confronts us, which is closely akin to openly criticizing another; it is in "pushing" people in their work. An individual might not be revealing a fault, but he does not go far enough in a certain course. He is all right as far as he goes, but he does not go far enough. A business executive wants to speed up production; a sales manager wants to boost sales; a mother wants her child to do better work in school; and even a sweetheart wants her beloved swain to harbor more ambition. But nobody likes to be directly urged along. It is like prodding a man in the back in order to make him walk faster. People like their old gait and do not want to be disturbed. It is more than being contented with old, cramping habits, however. It involves again the principle of self-importance. To tell a person to be on a move is to clearly and pointedly imply that he does not know enough to see the need of it himself, or is so blind that he has to be pushed into it. This treatment obviously violates his sense of self-worth, no matter who is doing the prodding. A man tends to put a low estimate on himself when directly told to "speed up production." Speeding up of others must then be done in another way if it is to be done efficiently.

Yet another important principle is violated when a man directly criticizes or tries to shove people along. It is the principle of self-initiative. There are some things that every person wants to do himself, and two of them are to discover his own faults and to boost himself. In the recesses of every person's life there is this love of individual liberty. A love of freedom is innate and not something acquired. We may be blind to our faults, but we want to uncover them ourselves. We may be set in our ways, but we want to do the upsetting ourselves, when there is any upsetting to be done. We certainly do not direct or control our lives very intelligently, but if there is to be a control we want it to come from our own minds. Impatience and irritability force themselves upon us as we wait for others to see themselves as they are and to bestir themselves; but people must eventually lead themselves if they are to progress. Open criticism and outside prodding constitute the wrong kind of attempted leadership.

If we could reveal a person to himself; if we could have an individual correct himself; if we could get an individual to prod along his own mind—all without him knowing that we were doing it—what a service we could render! If we could cause an individual to stimulate his *own* creativeness, be a *self*-prodder, and respect and use his *own* personal liberty—what a difference between this method and our frank and brutal manner of deflating an individual's ego!

This refined method is indirect suggestion. This method accomplishes the tremendous task of not violating the principles of self-importance and self-initiative. It then saves the person's self-respect and prevents him from placing a poor estimate upon his mentality.

II. MEANING OF INDIRECT SUGGESTION

The first point to emphasize in explaining indirect suggestion is that this method of dealing with others always employs *two* ideas, whereas direct suggestion always employs *one.* But of the two ideas employed, one of them is hidden while the other is exposed. Hence the name "indirect."

Why hidden? Because this is the only way by which a needed idea can be indirectly suggested to the recipient. If I openly tell another that he is very slow in his work, he will not welcome the idea. But if I hide it behind another idea, it will be easily accepted.

But why is this so? Because one of the remarkable aspects of indirect suggestion is that the hidden idea is not thought to have its origin in the suggester's mind, but in the mind of the recipient. This feeds the principle of self-initiative, and a person addressed feels proud of making his own discovery. This, in turn, exalts the principle of self-importance, for original discovery or self-initiative always promotes the sense of personal worth. Thus indirect suggestion becomes, in the last stage, auto-suggestion, or accepting unconditionally an idea from one's own mind. Our *own ideas* are thought to be the strongest, with few exceptions. A conviction wrought on the anvil of one's own mind is thought to be weightier than one derived from others. This is borne out by an experiment conducted by Strong.[1] The subject was asked to squeeze a dynamometer with maximal strength of grip after being given oral and written, positive and negative instruction to the effect: "Now you can make it stronger than usual," and, "Now you can't make it as strong as usual." The subject was also asked to employ auto-suggestion and to choose between the positive and negative instruction: "Now I can make it stronger than usual," and, "Now I can't make it as strong as usual."

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[1] Strong, E. K., "The Effect of Various Types of Suggestion upon Muscular Activity," *Psychological Review*, 17: 279–293 (1910).

The results for three subjects indicate that a positive suggestion heightened the strength of grip in every instance except for the right hand of one subject. *But auto-suggestion tended to increase the maximal grip more than the other types of suggestion.* A person's own idea produced the greatest effect. Another interesting feature of the experiment is that the subjects said that suggestion had little effect, but the dynamometer reading contradicted this.

Moreover, this kind of auto-suggestion is even more effective than ideas actually determined by a man's own thinking, for it carries with it a special enthusiasm and impulse. Just why this is so, we do not know. But when an idea takes effect indirectly, it acts with something like an explosive force. It appears to strike with a tremendous drive. The greatest incentives come from indirect suggestion. So we find that indirect control is the most powerful in the world. A magic is in its hands and unexpected results follow.

When, therefore, in employing indirect suggestion, I relate to my friend, who is too slow in his labors, about a mutual acquaintance rapidly climbing the ladder of success, that he is very efficient, and one of the secrets of his progress is speed, my friend begins to nurse the idea of speed in his *own* endeavors. He gets the hidden idea, covered up by the open idea of relating an interesting bit of news. He speeds up as though a vision had struck him through his own initiative. He even thrills at the idea which would have fallen on enemy soil if I had directly told him of his fault.

A second point to emphasize in our explanation of indirect suggestion is that the recipient obviously should not think that the suggester is hinting. If so, every good effect is lost, and the indirect attack is defeated because the crucial idea is not hidden. If there is the slightest suspicion that the other person has the recipient in mind, it is not indirect suggestion. Many people "give their own case away" in their attempt to employ indirect suggestion. They are not subtle enough. Even a small child may often see through what another person is endeavoring to do with this powerful form of control. In a very literal sense the idea planted in another's mind through indirect suggestion must be so covered up that there is not the slightest chance of its ever being detected at the time of its performance. Otherwise, the recipient will never think the idea was incubated in his own brain with all of its attendant enthusiasm.

Therefore, as far as the recipient is concerned, the only idea that he thinks comes from another in indirect suggestion is the open one and the one that he thinks comes from himself is the covered idea. Strange is this reversal! Indirect suggestion works in the following way:

The Suggester		*The Recipient*
The open, but unimportant idea	——→	Only idea thought to be received
The hidden, but important idea	——→	Considered as an unintended idea and, hence, is taken as one's own idea

Thus, when I relate to a friend the success exploits of our mutual acquaintance, this idea fades away and settles in the background of my friend's mind while the idea of *speeding up his own work* rushes to the center of his attention and becomes suggestion with its immediate and automatic response. My open idea, *as far as the recipient is concerned*, is simply to relate as a matter of dramatic interest the business rise of an acquaintance with no perceptible implication that he should speed up his work, although I, of course, hope that this idea will be received in suggestion as the central, controlling thought. It is readily seen why indirect suggestion is the cleverest working of the human brain.

III. INDIRECT SUGGESTION IN BUSINESS

A business executive wants his employees to dress more neatly. No direct remarks are made because he knows the danger in the use of direct criticism or prodding. Instead he places in the general office a picture of a man headed toward leadership in the same business in which the executive is engaged—a picture that depicts a "live-wire," very attractively dressed at an office desk. It has its intended effect. The impression the executive *conveys* is that he simply wants to have an artistically businesslike office, but as far as the *executive* is concerned he is anxious to have his men improve in their dress. The result is accomplished with no feelings hurt and the workers' sense of self-importance is raised because self-initiative played an active part.

A superintendent of an industrial plant wants to inspire his men and stimulate in them an excellent morale. He resorts to the indirect method. Once a year he invites all of his foremen and representatives of the employees to his estate for an entertainment. There is abundant and fine food, excellent music, professional entertainers, and "favors." Nothing is said about speeding up production. The guests sincerely think that there is no ulterior motive in providing such an entertainment—the superintendent is merely showing his appreciation for their faithful service. But indirect suggestion is, nevertheless, at work with its strong subtle force. In the punch-bowl room he has, as more or less permanent fixtures, charts of methods of production of a rival firm, and particularly pictures of a few of their representative workmen and their production estimates. The broad contented smiles on their faces, together with the other evidence, indicate hustle and brilliancy. When asked about them, the superintendent merely says that it is one of his own personal hobbies to collect these kinds of records. Since he never mentions these firms in his various shop meetings, it is easy for his guests to think that the decorations in the punch-bowl room are only a hobby. But the hidden idea finds its mark, and shop spirit is raised to a high point. The entertainment is merely a "cover-up." From a psychological standpoint he is thoroughly justified in the use of this method, and no fault can be found with it ethically.

Another firm owner was troubled by a great deal of pettiness and crabbing criticism on the part of his workmen. He was wise enough to refrain from a direct verbal attack and consequently adopted an indirect one. Now he always holds a memorial meeting in the shop when any prominent national industrialist dies, and takes great care that a well-known orator eulogistically exalts the excellent traits of the deceased and mentions beautifully but casually that he was above pettiness. These memorials are impressively attended and are taken only as a matter of honor and respect accorded an important man. But the indirect effect is tremendous. In an extremely short time pettiness disappears among his workmen. When there are few deaths among important executives, he holds meetings to mark the birthdays of nationally prominent men and thereby induces indirect suggestion.

Boosting morale in business and industry is perhaps as big a problem as production itself. All kinds of methods are adopted. Very attractive posters with century-old tested proverbs are put up in conspicuous places in the office and shop; pamphlets of personality influence are freely distributed; pep meetings for greater personal efficiency are held; psychology classes are conducted that directly deal with personal problems in the shop; and bonuses are offered as incentives. But the greatest appeal, without a single bit of friction and without any embarrassment to a single person—just the very opposite of the methods cited above—is the silent working of indirect suggestion through the use of the unobtrusive example method.

Much can be written of the use of indirect suggestion in advertising, but it is not for the advertisement reader since the appeal is always by means of direct suggestion. It is employed between persons represented in the illustration of the advertisement itself. The present run of "B.O." advertisements are full of indirect suggestion. The conversation takes place "unexpectedly and unintentionally" between two girls in the presence of a third girl who has a disagreeable bodily odor and to whom no one has said a direct word about this popularity-killing factor. The talk centers about another who has no dates and was jilted by a boy friend because of "B.O.," but soon learned of the effective remedy for her body trouble and is now reinstated in society; the third party "by chance" overhears the conversation about the other girl and of the "B.O." antiseptic. As a result she is now dated every night. The "unintended" girl is the one who finally goes and does likewise.

The same method is employed in getting a person in the advertisement itself to get rid of the sudden national menace of halitosis, and if the grossly exaggerated value of cigarettes continues to be played up in our advertisements, indirect suggestion might be so powerful in its effect that even a person suffering in Dante's *Inferno* might be represented as suddenly reaching for a cigarette and—lo and behold—is saved and redeemed.

IV. INDIRECT SUGGESTION AND FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is a realm of beauty, but it is too often spoiled by frankness which people vainly endeavor to justify. These "frank" exponents take an unusual pride in their fault. It is often their last straw to bolster up their "good name." We hear them exclaim, "Well, I may have my weaknesses, but there is one thing about me: you can always know where I stand. I don't play the hypocrite. I tell people just what is what when the occasion arises," as though their frankness were a virtue. We thus see how individuals rise futilely to the defense of their frankness. They even do it under the guise of love. "If I didn't care so much for you, dear, I would not be frank with you."

But frankness can never hide under the guise of love. The latter, if it is real, does not practice the "art" of frankness, for it is contradictory to its very spirit.

Why is frankness a gross fault instead of a virtue? Because, as we have said, it does not respect a very fundamental desire of people, namely the feeling of self-importance. *The highest and best social relationship is playing up to each and every individual his sense of worth.* No matter how honeyed the words, or "protected" under the declaration of love, frankness always exalts one person at the expense of another. It is a seesaw affair with the critic in the air. The victim always feels cheap and the critic always feels important. How elevated are the frank critics over those they criticize! The latter are at their feet. Frankness is a degrading of human life, and destroys friendship.

Friendship, a rare gift, brings with it a sense of comradeship. It includes a give and take and a marked sense of equality. But frankness removes this marvelous democracy, and one person is made a "debtor" while the other is made a "benefactor." When a person excuses his frankness by saying that he did it out of friendship, he thus desecrates friendship by destroying its comradeship. Real comrades are not frank.

The only method that will safeguard the beauty of friendship is indirect suggestion. The regrettably few individuals who never mar friendship resort to this means, and yet faults may be more keenly felt.

The author never felt his faults more poignantly and received such a rush of inspiration as he did from a certain music teacher who never once openly exposed a single one of his weaknesses, or urged him to stir up his ambition; yet he now feels after a long stretch of years that she wanted to see him improve and resorted to indirect suggestion to bring it about. She struck without his knowing it, and the blows felt soft and warm. As I recall the relationship, she was unusually interested in people and especially in striking personalities. Their excellent traits she continually extolled, and their spirit was a constant topic of conversation. She always talked about them at the most appropriate time, taking care never to mention them when I was disinterested. Naturally I thought it was her method of entertainment with no ulterior motive. The contrast between these striking personalities and my own was bitterly seen, and yet since I thought that I made this discovery myself, I worked up a great determination to overcome my key faults.

The constant extolling of personalities is the most effective use of indirect suggestion to lead our friends to mend their ways. We become impatient, however, and resort to an expedient, the easy but inferior method of a frank attack. There may be times when it is difficult to avoid frankness, but this does not vitiate the fact that *self-observation* of a fault and *self-inspiration* through the indirect route is the most effective form to adopt.

V. INDIRECT SUGGESTION AND PARENTAL CARE

Parents often treat their offspring as though the only method of attack were to lower their sense of worth and to make them act as though they were apologies for their own existence. Children are no exception in respect to the universal love of a sense of self-importance. The feeling of having a place in the world is one of the first characteristics seen in every child, but it is often the first to disappear. Since every child has as much of a sense of importance in proportion to its mind as the adult, and probably more, direct criticism is as much out of order with it as with the adult.

Of course it is very difficult to eliminate direct criticism of the child, for there are many times when "immediate action" is demanded. Indirect suggestion at such periods is a little tardy. A child is abusing another youngster; it is breaking mother's best crockery; it is sitting on daddy's high hat; it is playing with matches and is about to burn down the house; it is disagreeably disobedient and haughtily refuses to obey. At such points quick and straightforward action is very necessary, and scolding or perhaps a good old-fashioned whipping is the only remedy at hand. The subtle form of indirect suggestion, while the most effective, does not get under way quickly enough to save the day.

But there are many instances where nagging and criticism are hurled at the child when the soft effect of indirect suggestion could be better used, the sense of pride saved in the child, and the lessons of life better inculcated.

It is surprising how well the child accepts direct criticism; but it too often has had to pay very dearly for it. In these cases only a little observation will convince one that the heart of the child has been taken out of him by such an attack—not by just one instance, but by a habit of criticism. Activity slumps; cordiality is lacking; a sense of fear crowds in upon it; timidity haunts its every step. Often rebellion sets in at the blow to its pride, and perversities of conduct set in as compensations. It may seem strange to the reader that a child might become a thief, a destroyer of furniture, or a miserable little prevaricator because its pride is hurt. Such behavior is easily labeled "moral perversity" or "natural orneriness" without the least insight into the fact that it is only a defense mechanism to hide humiliation. If it steals, it is putting you at its mercy; it subjects you to his control. If it lies or destroys property, it is evening up the score. Not all behavior is a psychological defense, an attempt to re-exalt the self—it might be the result of bad association or bad habit and consequently a moral question. But so much of the child's life is an attempt to balance the loss of its sense of worth that it is surprising that this fact is not more often recognized.

The best, and perhaps the only, method of indirect suggestion to practice on the child is by using examples of worthy personalities, just as it is used with the adult. It may be employed in reference to actual or to fictitious characters of literature. Descriptions of qualities of people admired in the community are also effective with no personal application whatever to the child. Mrs. Brown's boy, Frank, is unmanly in some respects and causes his parents a great deal of worry. Jimmie Smith in the same block is, on the contrary, such a manly little fellow that Mrs. Brown uses him as a reference in an indirect way. She tells of the splendid helpfulness of Jimmie, and since he was downtown in his Boy Scout suit that day, she comments on the benefits derived from the whole Boy Scout organization. Her hidden idea was to have her own boy join the Boy Scouts and lose some of his troublesome characteristics. But not a word was said to Frank of his weaknesses. He was ignored, though his mother had him fully in mind as he sat at the dinner table. Frank joined the Boy Scouts.

The constant method of one mother is to add certain characteristics and behavior to a girl or boy who is the subject of a story. If her child has been especially disobedient, then obedience is added and stressed in the hero or heroine. If her child has become careless in looking after his clothes or toys, then order is added and stressed in the subject of the story. If the child has taken something from another child and not returned it, then respect for the property of others is added and stressed. The mother is well pleased as she notes the sharp, sudden turns of conduct in her child with its pride saved and self-initiative preserved. The idea in the mother's mind to have her own child change his conduct is well hidden under the guise of a story.

Another mother buys a book containing children's tales, apparently to satisfy her own curiosity. She more or less keeps it out of the way of her child, but at certain times leaves it in a place where the youngster can easily see it. Aroused by curiosity and knowing that it is not intended for him, he reads it with fervid interest, thus reading certain stories which the mother thinks good for him. If told directly to read such stories, the child would have taken it as a direct criticism of his conduct. The child in discovering an idea for itself will treasure it more than if conveyed to it from others, just as is the case with the adult. Child rearing can be raised to more of a scientific level if parents would learn the art of indirect suggestion.

VI. INDIRECT SUGGESTION AND THE ARTS

The old-fashioned moral story generally had its moral conspicuously tacked on the end, and sometimes labeled in bold capital letters. Now this type of book is out of date, and for the good reason that people—including children—do not like to be "preached to," for it implies direct criticism. Let the story speak for itself, is the modern idea. Why? Because all art, including literature, should not intend to convey any other appeal than that which is inherent in the story itself. Otherwise, it is not art.

Literature as such merely tells a story just for the sake of the story; it does not moralize, or it is not supposed to. That is one of the reasons why people love art. There is no ulterior motive in the description of characters in tragic and humorous situations of life. Art is art because it so skillfully depicts a theme. It is art because of the way it represents a subject. That is its only aim. It does not criticize the reader; it is not a teacher that stands before a person and directly tells him his faults.

A story is read. The reader knows that it is written only for the sake of the story. He does not feel that the author has him in mind as a target in order to release a fusillade at his faults. But he never fails to get an idea from it indirectly. He profits by the mistakes of the villain. He is inspired by the acts of the hero or heroine. He gets an insight into trying situations. Suggestion is at work in a roundabout way. Every one rises from real literature filled with ideas on how to live, which he feels have arisen from his own mind. The incentive for a more complete life is, therefore, left to him. Herein lies its strong appeal, and it is one of the factors that makes it universal. The reader is allowed to draw his own conclusions. There is nothing personal in real literature, yet it is this very impersonal appeal that is effective. It permits ideas to filter into the minds of the readers indirectly, and it is, therefore, a splendid medium for indirect suggestion. Most of the time it is not *permanently* effective. The inspiration of literature soon wears off when we leave our libraries and mix with the strife of the world. But if the reader should persevere in holding the excellent ideas indirectly suggested in literature, reading would greatly change his manner of living. Yet even its temporarily indirect benefit may be far-reaching. Many a person is now practicing a valuable lesson indirectly learned from a novel. Literature, though not intended to act upon people by indirect suggestion, nevertheless, does so. It is, then, one of our greatest moral forces, even though an author should never moralize.

It is the same with the other arts—painting, sculpture, music, and even architecture—for lofty ideas filter from them indirectly into the minds of observers. All art has, consequently, two very powerful influences: first, an appeal for its own sake; and second, a civilizing force, though the latter is not intended.

When people, therefore, speak of immoral art, they are speaking of something that does not exist, for all art is for itself and does not seek to make people good or bad; the word "immoral" is applied to some products of art because the *indirect suggestion* it provides is not a healthy one. This is not planned on the part of the artist, but people nevertheless draw faulty lessons from art. The trouble does not lie principally in the *manner* in which a subject is represented, but in the subject matter of art. It is unfortunate that some artists, among whom are certain modern playwrights, choose bad subject matter that wrongly affects others by indirect suggestion.

VII. INDIRECT SUGGESTION IN PREACHING AND TEACHING

The most effective minister is the one who practices indirect suggestion on his audience. Religious exhortation is psychologically out of place. People, it is true, expect when going to church to have their faults exposed, and receive this direct barrage with blanched or reddened countenance; yet this is merely because of custom and not because it is the best method. Many ministers never berate their audiences; they extol great personalities of the living and the dead, and, strange as it may seem, the "preaching" of these men is not taken as a direct shaft hurled at the listeners. Their sermons are taken as works of art, as little masterpieces given for their own sake. This leaves room for an indirect appeal, powerful in its effect. A sermon that is a work of art in depicting a personality enables a churchgoer to arise from his pew as though he himself created his own idea of a more worthy existence and his own inspiration to be a better individual. Excellent preaching is really not preaching at all, strictly speaking; it allows the member of the audience to preach to himself. This is the strength and wonder of indirect suggestion. A progressive minister will learn and practice this great, potent force.

The teacher also makes her greatest appeal through indirect suggestion. The sponsor of education may find it easy to expose the weaknesses of his pupils, but every person will testify that his greatest teacher is one who never instructs by a direct personal attack on his weakness. This may be difficult at times to avoid. Direct personal criticism is a general habit of human nature, but this is not to say that it is a worthy habit.

The greatest influence of a teacher always comes from extolling the excellent work of others. And here, again strange as it may appear, the target does not feel that the instructor means to single him out for a shaft of personal criticism. The teacher seems only to be praising the work of others *as something due them* for enjoyment, and not something to expose their weaknesses. The teacher intends to expose a child, but the pupil does not feel exposed. The latter musters up his *own* incentive to do better work. So while a teacher's function is to teach and expose the poor development of pupils, even he can do it by the indirect way of having the pupils themselves discover their own faults.

VIII. INDIRECTION THROUGH OBJECTS

✓ Indirect suggestion as discussed so far is made through statement or word of mouth. But another kind commonly felt and recommended is conveyed through things or impersonal forces about us.✓

The influence of this indirect suggestion is evident in many fields. The salesman, for example, dresses well to impress the prospect with the idea that he is successfully selling his goods and thus to convey the idea that they are worth buying. As far as the buyer is concerned, he probably has the idea that the salesman likes to dress well. This is the open idea, but behind it is the other one—namely, to enhance the goods by associating with it something very attractive. If the buyer sees through the plan of the seller, it is no longer indirect suggestion.

The physician plans his office as a thing of beauty. He is thus indirectly seeking to convey to patients the idea of comfort and restfulness, although the patient feels that the physician enjoys beauty for its own sake.

The business office is a display of the latest and most elaborate decorations. The president of the firm wants indirectly to associate the idea of prosperity and efficiency with his business, although the customer gains the impression that the president enjoys excellent taste in and for itself.

The owner of a factory buys a handsome automobile; gorgeously dresses his daughter (to which she does not in the least object); lives in a sumptuous home; owns a yacht and a marvelous summer cottage; entertains lavishly—not necessarily because he enjoys such things but to have this display suggest indirectly the value of his manufacturing concern, although the public thinks he personally likes luxury.

Such a manner of conveying indirect suggestion through things is evident; but to convey indirect suggestion through intangible forces is not so evident and is not generally practiced.

The voice, for instance, is only a vocal apparatus in the minds of most people. It is considered merely a means to utter words—just a mechanical contraption. There is little realization of the subtle power behind the mechanics, its ability to convey the qualities of the mind. No other means of expression is as capable of indicating the *spirit* of the individual. The subtleties of the rising and falling inflections, the running variety of emphasis, the varieties of keys to illuminate a bit of conversation or oratory, the feeling tone—these are inexhaustible means to convey the idea of poise, confidence, power, charm, and the entire gamut of qualities one wishes to convey. The word with its evident meaning is the open idea, but these subtleties are the means to convey the hidden idea one wishes to impart. One person may not desire to tell another to keep up his confidence, but his tone of voice, *apparently* uttered to "fill in conversation," may instill confidence in the twinkling of an eye.

A person's carriage speaks loudly and firmly. A man may have a good carriage just because that is his habit, but it is used indirectly to set an example. This is true of an army officer setting an example for his soldiers, or a father walking erect to keep the small body of his son erect.

Those who give their time to social work, to church endeavor, to clinical work, and to mental rehabilitation seek to render service directly through words and deeds, and forget the indirect power of manner of personality to instill optimism, hope, courage, and endurance. Because of the power of indirect suggestion it is difficult at times to say which has cured an individual; direct suggestion, medicine, or a remedial social program. Often when a remedy has been given it has been a certain *manner* of acting that has turned an individual in a new direction—not *what* was said. How can a physician, psychologist, or psychiatrist always put his finger on what has cured the patient?

IX. CONCLUSION

Indirect suggestion, being a subtle play of one idea hidden under another, is difficult to practice. It is the most difficult form of thought, but is the very best social approach to human beings. It respects their deepest desires and lifts them by their own inner urges. Since it makes a human being his own master, it is naturally the most effective means of social approach. If we want to benefit others in our attempt at criticism, then it is wise to adopt indirect suggestion. It provides every means to safeguard the rights of others, and by so doing is necessarily the more beneficial in providing personal incentive, self-initiative, self-inspiration, self-observation, and the sense of self-importance. It exalts the human being and yet exposes his weaknesses. Indirect suggestion is a very excellent psychological attack. It is indeed odd that such a means of making every person his own leader is not discussed more in our textbooks. For indirect suggestion through things and impersonal forces may know no limit as a means to help and inspire others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is indirect suggestion difficult to practice?
2. Why do you think frankness is defended by those who practice it?

3. Why is there a greater incentive to an act if a person thinks the idea of it was created in his own mind?

4. Give an example of indirect suggestion from your own observation.

5. Why is a sense of self-importance and direct criticism contradictory?

6. Which is more prevalent—the indirect suggestion through statement or indirect suggestion through objects or impersonal forces?

7. What is the meaning of art for art's sake?

XI

WILL POWER, AS A FETISH

There is nothing good or evil save in the will.
EPICTETUS

I. DIFFICULTY OF PUTTING GOOD IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

The appeal of mental hygiene is one thing; its application is another. Many have been profoundly inspired with the ideal of an efficient mind, governed by excellent instead of poor ideas, but when there is an attempt to live a new and excellent idea, difficulties enter. The attempt often entirely fails, or is so clumsy that many give up self-improvement.

Students and adults are persuaded of the wisdom of eliminating self-consciousness, degrading oneself by word of mouth, dilatory tactics, getting into a rut, and many other poor characteristics; but when they endeavor to keep the opposite idea in their minds, it is "just too hard." They are enamored by the power of good suggestion and select certain healthful ideas to be their masters, but it appears not to work.

The common reply is that people do not really *try* to adopt good suggestion. They are lazy, indifferent, too busy conquering the world, too contented with old habits, it is said. "The trouble is they haven't enough will power to change their poor manner of living." And those who fail to put good suggestion into effect admit that they do not use sufficient will power to follow the conditions necessary to make good suggestion work.

We see that both critic and victim are under the assumption that the trouble is a failure to apply will power; that if an individual is to get anywhere in the way of mental improvement, he must exercise grit; he must take the "bit in his teeth" and with effort and struggle follow a thorny road to a bitter end; that will power is a great premium; that with it he can move mountains and without it he is a powerless and shameful creature. But a close observation will reveal that we have made a fetish of will power. We have set it on a pedestal and fallen down and honored it, as it were. Its glory and wonder appear to permeate the public mind. However, instead of will power being the controller of human improvement, it so seriously handicaps improvement that we really should question its value. The more a man employs will power, the more difficult he makes self-improvement; the less he employs it, the easier is his mental progress.

II. MEANING OF WILL POWER

There probably is an anxious query in the mind of the reader as to what is meant by will power. This is a fair question, for there is very much confusion resulting from the array of conflicting definitions. Naturally it would be out of place in this treatise on practical psychology to offer a detailed explanation and a critical analysis of the various definitions; but the reader should have clearly in mind the kind of will power here discussed, and be able to compare it with other definitions, so a brief survey will be given.

(1) Will power, or freedom of the will, is conceived by one group as a manikin—a kind of little man inside—or special kind of mental force in the mind. This is one of the most prevalent views among laymen. According to it, this manikin is a kind of potentate behind all of our experiences that furnishes us a freedom for action and makes our choices. Science does not accept this view. It is too speculative.

(2) Another very common view of will power is that it is that quality which keeps a man on the road to a goal in spite of all hazards. This is a man's character; without it an individual is brushed aside by the least wind of opposition and is merely a spineless creature. This view is scientifically accepted and is often the only one presented as the meaning of will power.

(3) Another common view of the meaning of will power is that it is the freedom man has to start or not to start a voluntary act. And, of course, the individual is thought to be the determiner and the initiator of such an act. If I want to move my arm it is up to me. I have the freedom. And common sense says that it is the idea sending the nerve current over the nerves and muscles that carries out the act. But some scientists say that the idea of an act is an aftermath of an act. We act first and then have an idea of it. The layman, therefore, puts the cart before the horse. What is here called "will" is merely a result of a skill. No one can will an act that he has never done before. Will power is merely habit.[1] If this is so, then there is really no will power present in the sense of freedom of action, for a skill in the habit stage is nothing more than a mechanical reaction with no mental guidance needed. If the layman believes this theory, he should remember, however, that the issue here is what *starts* an act and does not include the other important conceptions of will power.

(4) Another meaning of will power is that it gives a freedom of choice either of alternatives, or of several items. According to this view, an individual is not an automaton, but determines his own direction, or can if he so desires. He can go to the left, or he can go to the right. There is little opposition to this conception. Most everyone, scientist and layman, maintains that we have such a choice.

(5) Another meaning of will is the ability to set goals

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[1] Warren, W. C., and Carmichael, L., *Elements of Human Psychology* (1930), p. 248.

and pursue them. A recent exponent of this view is Aveling,[2] who treats his topic from a philosophical standpoint. To this conception there is very little objection. Most people believe that man has the power to set aims for himself and carry them out.

(6) Another meaning of will is also a philosophical one, propounded by Schopenhauer,[3] whereby an individual is conceived as being impelled to live by a blind urge in the subconscious. Consciously we cannot justify our existence. It occasions only misery and vexation, but we are nevertheless driven relentlessly on according to this view. Bergson[4] has a more optimistic philosophical position in his view of "*elan vital*"—the mental push in human beings to evolve a mind. Something may be said in support of both of these conceptions.

(7) A rather recent conception of will is that it rejects or postpones an activity that does not fit into established habits—the latter being called a man's "character." The theory may then be called the "character theory" of will. Thus a child trained in obedience will struggle to maintain its obedient nature and will introduce an extra effort to work off a temptation to be dishonest. It is apparent that it is this extra effort that prompts the exponents to call this situation will power. A person trained to speak well in public will withstand with a great deal of effort the danger of showing a self-consciousness. Or as Murphy,[5] who is a representative sponsor of this view, says, an Iroquois Indian trained to show a Spartan endurance will not show the slightest sign of intense suffering, though there may be plenty of extra effort exerted within him.

Along the same line is the conception that will power is not grasping impulsively at any and every stimulus, but delays a reaction until a more propitious time. Thus an athlete trained to a fine edge for a mile race will exert an extra effort to spurn the smoking of a cigarette until after the race. An earnest student will postpone his pleasure until he has completed his work. A wise adult on a diet will postpone the eating of certain foods until he is stronger, not, however, without this extra effort.

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[2] Aveling, F., *Personality and the Will* (1931).

[3] Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Idea* (London, translated by Haldane and Kemp).

[4] Bergson, Henri, *Creative Evolution* (translated by A. Mitchell, 1913).

[5] Murphy, Gardner, *A Briefer General Psychology* (1935), pp. 466–467.

This last view of will power is gaining in strength and acceptance. There is an apparent mental control in rejecting that which does not fit in with a kind of behavior desired to be maintained at a certain time, or in not acting impulsively at every turn of the wind. But while it seems very attractive on the surface, a second consideration will readily lead one to see that will power, conceived as freedom, is not *necessarily* present at all in the above situations. Even a hen sitting on a nest of eggs will not leave the nest at certain times, even when there is food right in front of it. Its character as a sitting-hen will not permit it. An "extra effort" might be required for the hen to continue to sit on her precious white objects and we may be inclined to praise the self-control of this fowl of the barnyard. But no one would say that the hen is really exercising mental control. It is merely following at the time the strongest bent in its nature. There is no freedom here, but compulsion, though there may be an extra effort as the weaker tendency to pick food tries to gain an exercise. We can stimulate the foot of a dog and cause the flexing of the leg, but if a second stimulus comes too soon, it will not lift its leg. It does not fit into the "character" of the nervous system to respond to stimuli coming too fast. There is no freedom here—only an impersonal compulsion. Even a gear in an automobile will not mesh if the right speed is not maintained. Here too it does not fit into the "character" of the machinery. But there is no freedom here. Either rejecting certain things or delaying the acceptance of them does not necessarily indicate a freedom.

A child trained in obedience has a set of habits which, if strong enough, carry it along into obedience. No freedom is present here. An Iroquois Indian, if trained strong enough in the Spartan attitude, will resist yielding to an expression of pain because of the force of his excellent Spartan habits, and there need be no freedom here, though the opposite conduct may struggle in vain for supremacy and set up the experience of "extra effort."

The attempt of contemporary writers to offer the delayed response as an illustration of will power may be misleading, and one wonders whether it is an endeavor to get rid of will power and substitute nothing but a mechanistic view, whereby a decision is made only with a preponderance of nerve strength and not with thought.

(8) Valentine[6] has expounded a view similar to the "character theory" of will. A young man has an offer of a trip to Europe, and at the same time an offer of a lucrative position at home. Conflict takes place. Effort enters, but what is present in this will-situation is a conflict of habit or tendency systems. The young man has developed certain interests from his past experience favoring a trip to Europe; he also has developed another set of interests favoring the acceptance of a lucrative job. What breaks the deadlock is a third interest system, which involves the tendency to postpone a decision until the decided act is the ideal or right thing to do. In other words, the young man makes a decision that grows out of his *habits* of deciding according to far-reaching benefits and not merely according to immediate impulse. It is simply the strongest set of habits winning out, *but only in the long run.* The decided act is finally on the side of strength and is not a "mere stroke of mental energy or push of the soul."

Valentine sums up his view of will by saying that will is the "sustaining of the attention upon a painful or distractful act, goal, or ideal until the called-for behavior ensues." This, he says, is what James[7] meant by will when the latter said, "Effort of attention is thus the essential phenomenon of will."

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[6] Valentine, P. F., *The Psychology of Personality* (1927), pp. 180–201.

[7] James, William, *Psychology, Briefer Course* (1892), p. 450.

But if we might venture a slight modification of Valentine's explanation, let us say that will is essentially the holding to a weaker tendency until it is so strengthened that it finally ensues in behavior. Putting it in homespun words: it is holding the besieged fort until reinforcements arrive. For instance, using Valentine's illustration, I have a choice between taking a trip to Europe or staying home and accepting a fine job. I prefer to go to Europe, but I hold my mind in abeyance until I consider both sides. I bring together the reasons for going to Europe, then the reasons for accepting the job. But what are the reasons? They are tendencies already built up in my nature. The advantage of getting a fine job, the advantage of making good money early in life, the advantage of getting an early start on my career, the advantage of marrying well because of a lucrative position, and the chance of going later to Europe a dozen times with a fine salary built up from a splendid position—all these tendencies outweigh the advantages of going to Europe. It is not will in the *last* stage, but only in the *first* stage of this decision-situation. I do not act impulsively, but hold the two fields of interest until one or the other wins out by a greater appeal. Here I have a freedom of mind. I can act impulsively if I want to, or I can hold the weaker tendency to stay at home until all of the advantages of a fine job are considered. It is not the *strength* of tendencies that wins at first. This comes only last. But in light of the "character theory" of will previously discussed, it may be understood that it is strength of tendencies that wins out at the start of an effort-situation. The Iroquois Indian in resisting a temptation to utter a cry of weakness when suffering is doing only the stronger thing of the moment. If there is a tossup at a certain time between duty and pleasure, the latter has at first the stronger appeal, but not *finally*, because when all of my tendencies to follow duty are mustered up, I have a stronger pull in that direction than toward pleasure. Will power is, therefore, a freedom to maintain a weaker tendency until it is reinforced and made the stronger thing of the *moment only* at the end of the decision-situation. Will thus involves two things: first, holding the two choices until one has the advantage in tendency strength; and second, the sense of effort in fighting the competing stronger system. Will is a form of control that inspects near and far interests before deciding. It is the opposite of impulse.

III. ADDICTION TO EFFORT

A. The Puritan Mind

The last definition of will is the one we shall adopt as we describe those individuals who make a fetish of will. What does this mean? It means that they live mostly by effort. They are the persons referred to in Chapter IV who think that life should be lived by a gnashing of teeth. They make a premium of struggle. They drown their minds in tensions.

These people practice effort upon themselves. They have so lived, and are still so living, that their entire minds are a constant clash of interest or tendency-systems. They use their will as a constant day-by-day habit to force themselves to go in a certain direction while another course is pulling hard at them. They continually *manufacture* mental effort. They are under the "must" tradition. From their religious and social background they have inherited the idea that life is a whole array of duties—things that *must* be done—things that *should* be done—things that *ought* to be done. They have turned life into a huge commandment *compelling* them to act. The easy, appealing, pleasurable, and enjoyable course they do not follow. It is *obligation* which is their god—as though life were a taskmaster *driving* them as slaves. They have involuntarily become like Wordsworth, who says in his "Ode to Duty":

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love
Who are a Light to guide, a Rod
To check the erring, and reprove;
Thou, who are victory and law
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free;
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!
Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace.

We are not saying that there is no such thing as duty. We are speaking only of the individuals who apotheosize it. They are the ones whom J. J. Roche mentions:

And I read the moral—A brave endeavor
To do thy duty, whate'er its worth,
Is better than life with love forever,
And love is the sweetest thing on earth.

or D. M. Muloch when he says:

Duty's a slave that keeps the keys,
But Love, the master, goes in and out
Of his goodly chambers with song and shout,
Just as he please—just as he please.

What are the tendency-systems that are constantly clashing in the minds of those who glorify effort? There is on one side the tendency toward the *appealing* in life, the love of pleasure, of joy, of love itself, of beauty and harmony. Man is born to express himself with ease. This is his biological right. Herrick[8] says that "the normal activity of the body within physiological limits is intrinsically pleasurable." The field of biology thus informs us that man's nervous system is made to function smoothly. This is a law that nature decrees.

An individual has natural leanings toward the harmonious, and the joyful. He cannot help but want his fun, pleasure, abandonment, and relaxation. His leanings in this direction are inevitable.

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[8] Herrick, C. J., *An Introduction to Neurology* (1922), p. 287.

But on the other side is the second system of habits built up by a stern tradition and training which shuns the ease and harmony of life. The writer knows an individual with such a tradition who, surprising as it may be, actually shunned for several years the getting of a Ph.D. in the very field in which he found his interest and enjoyment, namely, psychology. He felt that he had, instead, to pursue a hard, disagreeable task and take his Ph.D. in philosophy, which was not to his inclination and which was disliked. This may be an extreme case, but only in degree. Many individuals are making life deliberately tough. They *seek* effort. They shun pleasure even when it is within their group. They create too much internal friction. Even at a dinner party they act as if eating with friends is hard work.

These people are too involved with what they "ought to do." The concept is typified in the word "duty." Rigorously trained to do the hard thing, they have built by the bonds of habits strong tendencies in this direction. We then have the clash of tendency-systems, with the natural tendencies for ease and harmony pulling one way, and the tendencies to do the tough thing pulling the other way, as in Figure 18.

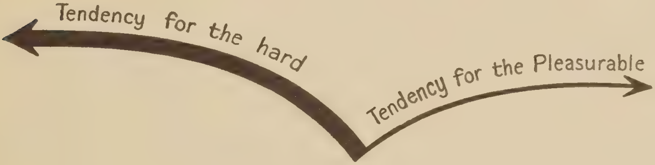

Figure 18.

Will power holds the two systems at bay until the stronger tendencies toward duty win out. Hence, there is a continual strain and stress. Effort is always a constant companion. The people in this class put it on a pedestal and bow down before it.

This constant clashing of tendency-systems is well portrayed in the Puritan character of Oliver in Santayana's[9] recent novel. Life according to Oliver is a matter of constant struggle. The business of living is a hard task. He wants to follow duty, but he also wants to follow a life free from restraint. He wants to make his living a very strenuous matter, but he also wants an abandonment in the manner of living. Sometimes there is open rebellion. But most of the time these two tendency-systems set up an unresolved opposition, resulting in the strained mentality with its attendant ills that the typical Puritan is heir to. The Puritan type, and many are still alive, has been so hardened in taking life too seriously that he seldom smiles, and if he laughs heartily, feels ashamed. He rejects the easier way.

B. The Breaking of Faults

The second way in which too much effort or will power is employed is in trying to eradicate faults. This may seem to be a strange statement, but people often fail to eliminate anger, irritability, sarcasm, scorn, criticism, and other undesirable traits by trying to do so. Persons fail to get rid of them because of the very use of will power.

We can illustrate our point by a golfer. He buys a new ball—to make the illustration more pointed—and begins to tee off right by a water hazard. He is determined to keep the ball from going into the water. He even swears—silently or orally—to this effect. He sets up his ball and is tense in trying to make a good shot. Two systems of tendencies are competing—one to keep in the fairway, and the other to go in the water.

Why is the latter tendency present at all? It is due to suggestion, which we have explained. The idea of *water*, WATER, WATER, is centered in his consciousness. He can barely think of anything else. Of course, he does not want the ball to go into the water, but he is *furiously thinking* water—and naturally without question. He does not say, "Well, I don't think there is any water present, or even if there is, it offers no temptation whatsoever." Water is present, not only actually, but in concentrated thought with its terrific temptation to enter into its watery bosom. There is no argument about it. His effort puts his mind on the wrong thing.

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[9] Santayana, George, *The Last Puritan* (1936).

Now why does the ball go into the water? Again because of suggestion. Center an idea in the mind and it will automatically go into action. Naturally the player's nerves and muscles are pulling in the direction of his greater attention. There is really very little attention or virtually none at all on the fairway, and hence there is little pull of nerve and muscle in that direction. By the very law of dynamics he puts the ball into the water as naturally as I fall if I lean too far over a cliff. If he put his mind as much on the fairway as on the water, presuming that he is a skillful golfer, chances are that he would go straight down the fairway. He tried *too* hard and did just what he did not want to do.

This principle of suggestion may apply to anything that we *try* to avoid. The trout fisherman knows that if he puts his mind *too much* on avoiding a certain bush as he endeavors to place his fly on a certain small spot of open water, he may easily become entangled. Putting his mind on the open water rather than on the bush is better mental tactics.

This same principle applies to people in their common and numerous attempts to get rid of their bad habits. By trying very hard to avoid repeating the fault, a person centers the *thought* of the fault. *Sarcasm*, SARCASM, SARCASM, for instance, is in his mental focus, even though he does not want to be sarcastic. His determination to avoid it puts suggestion to work. Before he realizes it, his tendencies to sarcasm may be automatically set going. Will power to break a fault is very faulty. It is mentally dangerous, and as an effort method should be avoided. Discouragement from a failure of this effort method is equivalent to an exception in forming a new habit. With this exception the old habit is more deeply embedded, as James[10] emphasizes.

IV. THE WAY OF LEAST RESISTANCE

In our second chapter we spoke of the various ways that are helpful in habit-breaking, such as the conditioned response, the negative remedy, and the segmental. There is another method useful for breaking habits—the attraction method.

What is the attraction method? To overcome a fault or a bad habit, a person should think and therefore act as if he did not have it. This is the positive approach; unlike the negative approach, it places in the center of attention the proper idea without the risk of the effort method.

It is the attraction method which includes the way of least resistance. We have already seen that when an idea is adopted in thought and behavior by the effort method, there is a risk of futility. Most people make it as difficult as possible to break an old habit or fault and to form a new one, without much success. Old habits are still rooted in their natures in spite of glorious resolutions. And effort-attempts to put into practice the principles of mental hygiene have probably left many people wondering whether mental rejuvenation can take place.

What then is the way of least resistance in adopting good suggestion? Just the very opposite of the effort-method. The way of least resistance is centering in attention the idea of the desirable act you wish to adopt instead of the idea of the act you wish to avoid. With the positive idea in full attention it keeps its place by attractiveness and not by effort. The desirable idea draws and does not drive.

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[10] James, William, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), Chap. IV. ("Habit"), p. 123.

It is the way of beauty instead of the way of the "must." It is the Greek way of harmony instead of the old Hebrew method of command. There is thus a lure, instead of a compulsion, in going into a new activity as a possible habit. The Greeks in their art, philosophy, and ethics never taught that one *must* or *should* follow a certain wise course. If an idea does not *appeal*, it is not to be followed. If you do not see in scholarship a charm and an attractiveness, why stock up your library because you *should* do it? If you do not see in courage its own attractiveness, why muster up this quality as though you ought to do so? If you do not see in friendship the beauty of harmony, why adopt friends because "that is the thing to do"? If you do not see in cordiality a more *appealing* way than gruffness, why cultivate this excellent characteristic because of conventional *necessity*? If you do not see in unselfishness a warmth and a glow, why become unselfish because a certain moral precept commands you to follow it?

With the attraction method the proper idea is centered in attention without effort. There is nothing to divert the mind to faulty thinking. The attractiveness of the idea gives it first place in the mind. Then by the principles of suggestion it should automatically go into nerve and muscle response—a reaction greatly desired. Putting the mind on what you *want* offers a greater probability of success than putting the mind on what you do *not* want.

Plato made wise living a matter of ease, or like a melody of music. Aristotle based it on a principle of the golden mean. Thus, a worthy act is something between two unwise extremes. It has an architectural symmetry. A man need not be gushing in his sentimentality nor cold and reserved, but something between these extremes is an excellent balance. Right thinking and acting are then things of beauty. To spurn a thought is to do so because it is ugly; to accept a new thought and its corresponding behavior is to do so because of its *intrinsic appeal.*

We have here the appeal of beauty as compared to the drive of an "ought." There is a great vital difference between these two attitudes. What a tremendous difference in our manner of living there would be if the tradition of beauty had won and spread itself over the Western nations! The effort method, or putting a premium on hardship, would then never have become a troublesome tradition, and living would probably be more efficient and impregnated with more happiness.

V. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF AN IDEA, THE NATURAL WAY

When the psychologist asks that habit-breaking be made attractive in order to win by its own appeal, he is only following the way of early childhood when we formed most of our present habits. A child, except for the compelled acts, does a thing because he *wants* to. There is some appeal about it or he would not do it, whether it be disobeying his mother, stealing apples, or sitting on Daddy's Sunday hat. Acts *draw* the child. There is a spontaneity in what it does. All of us have built most of our array of habits in this manner. Parents compel their children to do certain things, but they nevertheless know that it is very hard to form a habit through compulsion. Sweetness catches more children than vinegar.

Yet when adults attempt to break a habit, they violate this principle of spontaneity and *force* themselves to be friendly, to be courteous, to be aggressive, and so forth. Nature, in its normal course, forms habits with an ease that is so gradual that our characteristics are formed before parents realize it, and yet adults take all the ease out of a new habit formation.

A. The Understanding of a Fault

To adopt the attraction method a person should first realize the exact nature of the old habit to be overcome. We are so unconscious of the effect of our faults upon others that we do not see the full impression we make upon our fellow men. We are also too close to ourselves to see ourselves as we are. Not even a psychologist can tell exactly what kind of an effect he is having on the audience, for instance. But by reviewing his acts, or by personality ratings from others, a man may gain an idea of how bad a fault is. People do not begin to get rid of their weaknesses because they do not know just how much they disconcert others, and even themselves.

B. The Way of Imagination

The second and most important step to take in following the attraction method is to use the imagination instead of the will. It is not blindly driving ahead with a sense of effort that overcomes a fault, *but envisioning the fortunate consequences of the substitute behavior.* Why is it attractive to kill sarcasm with courtesy? What is the benefit and pleasure derived from putting cordiality in place of anger? What is the appeal in substituting comradeship for argumentativeness? What is its *value*? A man must use his *imagination* to see this appeal before adopting the new idea and the new conduct. Mental hygiene should be taught with *inspiration*, and perhaps in groups so that social facilitation will make the new plan, the new course to pursue, the new habit to form, a very attractive matter. A new idea to be adopted should be an ideal.

The attractive appeal is not difficult. It calls merely for a mental switching—a willingness to turn from a way of effort to a way of ease. It merely calls upon us to forsake the customary. To adopt good suggestion because of its splendid value is never hard. To be *drawn* toward a good painting, a good symphony, a good book, is not difficult. To be *drawn* to the art of wise thinking and acting is not hard. We are just not used to it. We have been trained to force ourselves to take care of the weeds in the garden instead of the roses.

To follow good suggestion by the way of imagination is to make its value so prominent that it becomes the strongest thing of the moment, and the unattractive injurious old habit sinks into the background. To let the imagination dwell on the benefits—not the effort—of a new and wise way of living is to give it the right of way and to make its strength a winning power. To see that industry, tactfulness, cordiality, sympathy, and other qualities are clothed in the might of their *own value* is to eliminate all the undesirable injuries entailed by the effort method. Life is then made attractive; it gives joy; the old habit is put in a weak position; and good suggestion is allowed to function. There is always more strength in beauty than in effort.

VI. CONCLUSION

The rebuilding of the human mind is most effective through the lure of its value pictured to us by the glow of imagination. Will power kills the lure. Imagination raises it. The more one uses will power the *less* good suggestion works. The more the principle of attractiveness is followed, the *more* good suggestion works. It may be difficult to prevent forcing ourselves when we begin a new endeavor, but the sooner all effort is dropped the better the progress toward mental rehabilitation.

However, we know that it is impossible in the present setup of society to eliminate will power. A man is faced with so many disagreeable tasks that the attraction method cannot be adopted. He must drive himself and personify the effort method. A young man forces himself to accept the first job in sight in order to support his widowed mother. A parent sacrifices in order to provide medical care for his children. An ambitious girl is forced to relinquish the idea of going to college because of lack of funds. A young man feels the sting of duty to go to war. Life is full of inward struggle, owing to competing tendency-systems where will holds a tendency to its course regardless of other appeals. But it is also true that we often have a free choice of accepting either the effort or the attraction method in a desire to improve a phase of our personalities, but we choose the harder way.

The reader, however, should be cautioned not to confuse will power with the necessary hurdles a man has to get over in order to strengthen his mental fiber. There is a big difference between will power and having enough resistance to prevent becoming a mental jelly fish. The child or the man should not have it too easy. James says in his chapter on habit, already quoted, that a person should do a hard thing every day just because it *is* hard. Life as a whole is *developed by resistance.* The seed pushes its way to the sunlight by resistance against the soil; the runner develops not in a vacuum but by resistance against the surface of the track; the bird strengthens its wings by resistance against the air. A child also needs resistance to develop; he needs problems to solve, difficulties to be surmounted, hard things to buck against to strengthen his mind, just as the swimmer needs strength and skill in order to buck the current.

But this natural resistance is not will power. The former is outward, whereas the latter is inward. The former unites and strengthens the mind; the latter divides and weakens it. The former leads to joy of victory, the latter to strain and discouragement.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Give some definitions of will power.

2. What are the differences between the definitions of will given in this chapter? Do some overlap?

3. Is it necessary to use will power in getting started in a new endeavor?

4. If the attractiveness of an idea is an easier means to induce a new habit-formation than will power, why is it not generally adopted?

5. Why does *fighting* to overcome a fault often embed it more deeply?

6. What would be some good means to stimulate the imagination to entice yourself to adopt a new attitude or behavior?

7. How prevalent is the Puritan tradition with its addiction to effort?

8. What is the difference between will power and naturally needed resistance?

XII

LACK OF CONFIDENCE

He who has lost confidence can lose nothing more.
BOISTE

I. NEED OF CONFIDENCE

In a survey of students taking psychology courses in a certain university six hundred young people were asked to name their most troublesome personal difficulty even though it was not necessarily a serious problem. Seventy-five per cent named "lack of confidence." This lack covered all degrees from an abject feeling of inferiority up to a feeling of only partial insufficiency but with a marked need of more confidence. The words "courage," "nerve," "taking a chance," "bravery," "pluck," and "daring" were employed synonymously to mean confidence.

The result of this survey is not at all surprising. It probably represents the public at large. Every psychologist on the basis of mere general observation would say that the trait most people need is confidence.

The conspicuous examples of what is commonly called "an inferiority complex" keep many individuals from noting a lack of confidence in people in general. The extreme case is so outstanding that mild and moderate cases are unobserved or forgotten. A business magnate whose success may be the basis for an excellent magazine article may secretly confess that his one prominent personal difficulty is lack of confidence. A sculptor whose name is heralded from one end of the world to the other may be burdened with the need of confidence. A writer whose pen inspires thousands may personally need the very thing he furnishes others. Rousseau was a shrinking individual in many respects. A genius who dares to wrestle with the mysteries of nature may personally be a very timid man. Newton and Faraday were very self-conscious. A philosopher who alarms the world with his theme of rugged sternness may be like Nietzsche, whose personal life was the very opposite of his teaching. These men possess a confidence in their own profession but feel ill at ease in other walks ot life. Those who are among our greatest producers, as well as those who do not produce, may be afflicted with this bugaboo of a lack of confidence.

There is also the vast middle class that produces a little something now and then. Among them are the physicians, lawyers, ministers, teachers, politicians, ordinary businessmen, artisans, and, in fact, the great bulk of people who keep the regular affairs of the world going. In this class are many who feel that life would be more complete if they had the confidence they feel they ought to have. Many a teacher shrinks from things he ought to tackle. Many a lawyer sees needed reforms in his profession, but hesitates only because he hasn't the courage to propose reform. Many a minister envisages a new program of church improvement, but he hesitates because of lack of confidence. Many a businessman could extend his business and become a leading merchant in town, but enough confidence is not present to urge him on. Many an artisan could leave his old employer and "set up shop" for himself, but he is afraid.

The people in this large middle class possess the ability for a fine personal advancement—good judgment, creativeness, ambition, congeniality, coöperation, vision, industry, perseverance, and other success traits—but they wait and wait to take the next step.They are not full producers because of a lack of confidence. It is interesting to compare two people, one a noted success and the other just a plodder with little production, and see the difference. Often it emblazons itself in fiery letters: "Lack of Confidence."

Myriads of individuals would be lifted out of commonplace mediocre living if the necessary confidence were planted in their minds. It is not lack of knowledge, judgment, or critical faculties that keeps people back. Even a laborer with his pick and shovel may intelligently criticize a government or any organization, but he usually lacks the courage to express his convictions. Civilization would advance in a few years as far as it has in many if people had the needed confidence to go ahead. Crooks remain in power; criminals continue to exploit the public; war remains a savage blot on the modern landscape because people as a whole have not the confidence to strike the deciding blow against these conditions. The evils of today remain entrenched because the public is afraid to think and act decisively.

It does not require a man with superhuman endowments to become a leader of a group, or even the dictator of a nation. Give a thousand men the necessary confidence and there would be a thousand Mussolinis. The leader is often the one who dares while the others watch and wait. It is the lack of confidence in people in general that puts a great price upon the leaders who venture even though they may not have great intellects. Outside of a few whose confidence topples them backwards—it is called "conceit" if they are not producing, and "manly courage" if they are producing—everybody else can stand a great deal more confidence.

II. WHAT IS A LACK OF CONFIDENCE?

Authors have defined lack of confidence in various ways. James[1] discussed belief as the basis of certainty or confidence; for instance, the belief in our own existence is the "ultimate of ultimates." Trow[2] experimented on confidence when defined as the certainty a man has in his judgment as to correctness of answers to various ethical questions, logical fallacies, arithmetic problems, and so forth. Griffing[3] investigated the degree of confidence a person has in his intensive differences of sensations.

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[1] James, William, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), Vol. II, Chap. XXI.

[2] Trow, W. C., "The Psychology of Confidence," *Archives of Psychology*, 67 (November, 1923).

But for mental hygiene this sort of confidence is not the kind we have in mind. Confidence may be defined for our purpose as the lack of trust in *ourself* in dealings with fellow men. This is necessarily very relative, dependent upon the individual himself. The man of genius, though very confident of his ability in his own line of work, may nevertheless feel very insignificant in talking and associating with people. To him this feeling of insignificance is a serious problem, and from his point of view he rightly says that he lacks confidence. A person of the middle class may be a good carpenter or a good plumber, but in many things he feels a general timidity—meeting people, making a speech, asking for a raise, proposing to a girl, being chairman of a meeting, taking any part in an organization, and so forth. This fear is also a serious problem, and from his point of view he rightly says that he lacks confidence. Another man possesses a much-talked-about "inferiority complex" and almost everything he tackles is approached with "fear and trembling." Both his work and social relations are strained by the weakening sense of a lack of confidence. He feels that the whole of life is hunting him down as though he were a fugitive from justice.

In other words, lack of confidence as here employed means what the layman means by it, namely, a distrust in oneself either in a certain aspect of life or in the ways in which he desires to feel confident. It may apply to a small slice of life or to the entire gamut of living. Many a person feels a gnawing lack of confidence in just one thing, such as making a speech or playing a cornet. This lack is a problem because the subject desperately wants to feel at home in making a speech or playing a cornet. And it may color his entire life. When such an individual gains a victory in his timid endeavor, it is often as though he had changed his entire life. A lack of confidence follows in the wake of any one thing or many things which we arduously want, but fear of the self fails to gratify that want.

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[3] Griffing, H., "On Sensations from Pressure and Impact," *Psychological Monograph,* 1 (1895).

It is true that this type of confidence-lack is difficult to bring into the laboratory, but psychology, nevertheless, may offer help apart from laboratory experimentation on the problem. The life histories of prominent men have suggested such a help.

III. IS LACK OF CONFIDENCE NATIVE IN HUMAN BEINGS?

The great array of people everywhere, under every flag and in every clime, who want more confidence in their lives may raise the question whether this universal lack of confidence is a natural or inborn lack. The universality of a lack of self-confidence is often taken as a sign that it is inherited. But since universality is not necessarily a sign of something innate, we are led to question whether lack of confidence is innate. Indeed, if it were a trait handed on by heredity, psychologists would have a difficult time in offering much hope to anyone. Then we would be faced with the problem of why certain persons have the desired confidence and others have not, or that some people say they have a lack of confidence when it applies to only one little aspect of life, whereas to others it applies to all of life.

There is reason to believe that confidence, especially if wanted for many things, is like "the lost tribes of Israel." It strayed away from the fold, and we are still searching for it. What fold? We must go back to childhood for the catastrophe that brought about this loss. It is in the first tender years of living that we find an answer to a host of our personal problems.

How does the baby *begin* life? Is he first frighted down with fear, or a lack of confidence? Does he hesitate to reach for his first big red ball because he feels an inferiority complex? Does he appear to say: "The good things in life are not for me. I am unworthy and must be content with a small bit." As we all know, the young child is radiant with what may be called confidence. He demands everything in sight. He forbids himself nothing his eyes behold. The baby is either a king or a queen, and others run to do his bidding. There is no mental shrinking in the baby, or necessarily in the very young child. He does not merely watch and hesitate. He goes after what he wants, and he wants all. This lack of fear is as natural as the development of his hands and feet. This confidence is, of course, not conscious or planned, but is thoroughly ingrained in the budding mind. It is a native aggressiveness, even though in adulthood it may be clarified and made quite conscious and deliberate.

Then why do people lack confidence? Because, for the most part, something like a cataclysm struck them when they were young children. Very few adults permanently lose their confidence. Pure, pristine nature was shattered. Life was spoiled. The child's demands were too seriously tampered with. Somewhere along the stretch of years he lost his buoyant, natural, bubbling confidence in himself.

Watson's[4] experiments with babies convinced him that emotional reaction is acquired or conditioned. This includes all fear reactions. Since a lack of confidence is a species of fear, we may safely conclude from this experimental evidence that the baby naturally feels at home in this big world until it is *made* fearful by circumstances. Even when Watson says that a loud noise or a lack of support naturally brings about fear in the child, this does not mean that the fear was *already in* the child before he was thus stimulated. It is for this tremendous loss of confidence that society must be held responsible, although we cannot hold society criminally responsible. Child rearing is much a matter of innocent ignorance and mismanagement. No one as yet can scientifically and perfectly rear a child. Childhood is too baffling and complex. There are too many factors to control. We still need to rear children as well as we rear skyscrapers. The problem of a lack of confidence in respect to a great many of life's demands still remains, and the loss of self-courage is a regrettable blow to enthusiastic childhood. It is a loss that may mark a child for life, and hence for many people the world becomes nothing more than something from which to retreat.

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[4] Watson, J. B., *The Ways of Behaviorism* (1928), p. 59.

IV. HOW IS CONFIDENCE LOST IN THE CHILD?

A child's confidence is lost because it loses its sense of importance. There are three factors involved: first, parental training; second, associates other than family; and third, the impersonal forces of circumstances.

A. Parental Training

Parents may be divided into two groups for our purpose: those who deliberately mistreat their children, and those who do not. However, as far as evaluation of results is concerned, there may not be any difference.

It is obvious that parents whose children are unwelcome, or who are themselves unprincipled, may easily take all confidence out of a child. When they do so, there is a continuous rat-tat-tat of scolding. Severe punishment becomes a daily routine until the child is cowed; the father often lends his hand to infliction of bodily pain. Cruel deprivations are heaped upon the child. A little toy could be presented now and then, but it is not. Little pleasant surprises could greet the child, but there is only the heavy hand of command laid upon him. Free and joyful laughter is suppressed as though this wonderful release were criminal. The mind, and sometimes even the body, of the child is put into a strait jacket.

It takes a long time to whip the mind of a child into fear. Months and even years may be required. Nature apparently holds out for a long period, as if it were loath to part with something precious and innate. Anything fundamental to human nature always puts up a tremendous battle before it succumbs. Unrestrained enthusiasm may keep pouring itself out in spite of unkind treatment, and at times may even convert the hearts of the parents. But often the enthusiasm of the mistreated child is soon beaten out of him, and with furtive eyes he acts as though his every deed were his own bid for a cruel punishment.

The torture method of child rearing is very evident in its pitiable results. The ill effect, however, is not as evident in the child whose parents *plan* the very best of kind and humane treatment, but act unwisely. It is not as glaring when the child is "the apple of the eye," or the fond object of a teeming ambition to make him a great man, or her the belle of the town.

But unwise training of the well-meaning parent may also kill confidence. The pampered child sheltered in the home is made to feel *too* important. He is waited on constantly and his every wish is carefully considered and gratified, if practically possible. All is well until he goes to school, or begins to seek play companions outside of the home. Then the onslaught begins. Teachers and play companions refuse to cater to his whims. This refusal is overdone in order to show him his proper place. He is shown little or no sympathy, and playmates may even shun him. The effect is often bad. The child feels cast aside and a sense of unimportance sets in. He drops his daring and becomes confused and inactive. Sometimes the disillusionment comes late in the teens when he is forced to attempt to assume responsibility, or after college graduation when a job or position is assumed with too much timidity. Yet in nine cases out of ten the loss of confidence comes in early childhood.

Furthermore, parents may unwittingly restrain a child too much with a consequent loss of a sense of self-importance. Irritability and nervousness of parents affect the child in a way they do not plan. His exuberance is too much for them and the result is a constant "Don't do that," until the youngster feels that he is in the way.

Well-meaning parents may also show little sympathy and affection for the child. Troubles that are tragedies to the young life are indifferently treated. He soon feels alone in the world. Many parents do not show love in the right place. And finally, many parents show great sacrificial care to a child but little warmth, and this cold but meticulous supervision may have an injurious effect.

B. Outside Associates

The second general factor in killing a sense of importance in the child is the out-of-home associates. He may not be spoiled in the home, but he may have a little timidity which is misunderstood by his young friends, and they may pass him up. Or he may be a victim because his parents move frequently from city to city until he does not quite feel at home anywhere. The writer has met more than one case of lack of confidence because of this continual uprooting of a child from one place to another. Moreover, a group of children may constitute itself an in-group and resent the admittance of another. This banishment may cause a permanent shock to a child and a permanent feeling of little worth in the world. Then a number of bad associates may incite an innocent child to steal, or destroy property, and severe punishment may brand his mind with a conviction that he is bad, with the result that he retreats from people and suffers a loss of his feeling of worth. Many children are made to feel degraded by outside associates.

C. Impersonal Forces

Perhaps the greatest occasion for the loss of confidence by the child is a situation which is simply an unplanned turn of circumstances. A boy starts to school with gleeful hope in his heart. But he is not healthy and loses much time from school. He finds himself back in his studies and fails to be promoted. This is pure tragedy to the child, for it is not so much the loss of a few school lessons but the severe blow to his pride that is important. One day when the author met a group of first-year students coming from school, he happened to get into conversation with them. One youngster pointed to another and said, "He flunked in his reading." The sad look on the face of the "flunker" told its own story. The child did not grasp the idea that his frequent illnesses were an excellent excuse for his poor grade. To him it was not ill health, but a disgrace and a setback. Such a child has often carried this scar all through his years and has never regained the confidence lost by missing much time in his early schooling. Parents who have foreseen this possible result have labored long and hard with the child to make up his back work principally in order to restore his pride and not especially to make up a few lessons.

Another impersonal source to generate a feeling of inferiority is that of organ-inferiority. Perhaps no one has more graphically portrayed the loss of a sense of self-importance in the child because of a weak body than Adler.[5] The crippled body, the hunched back, the hair lip, the deformity in hand or foot, poor eyesight, bad hearing, and many other bodily weaknesses stamp upon the young child's mind the stigma of inferiority. And often a whole lifetime is employed in compensation in an endeavor to overcome this blow to the ego.

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[5] Adler, Alfred, *The Neurotic Constitution* (1926), Chap. I.

Even being retaught because of bad training may have a very bad effect. A college sophomore came into the author's office one day and said that she had just recovered her confidence in the last two years. She had been trained in certain subjects before going to school, but her training was faulty. Naturally the teacher had had to correct her, but she received from her first teacher an impression of being victimized, and this first effect killed her enthusiasm for twelve years.

No greater stigma on a child's buoyant mind is to be found than that which comes from a realization of poverty. It is the most potent cause of the oft-discussed inferiority complex. The child learns that poverty is a disgrace despite the falsity of the doctrine that he who possesses plenty of this world's goods is of better character and mind. Parents unintentionally praise those with means and by implication run down those with little. They personally cater to people with money and make themselves abjectly submissive to their wishes. They humble themselves in their presence, and the child innocently grasps the idea of a family inferiority.

In a survey made of college students by the author as to the origin of their loss of confidence, the one cause that stood far above any other was poverty. This home condition may make the child a shrinking, groping creature, and this feeling is very difficult to overcome. The writer knows an adult who is well off financially, but he eats oranges very sparingly because he unconsciously carries the feeling that too many are not for him. In his boyhood, oranges were a luxury.

Even some systems of ethics and religion help to make poverty a breeder of inferiority complexes, or at least a loss of confidence. They assume that the poor must always be with us and that Christian duty is to help the poor *in order* that service to these unfortunates may build up character. One wonders at times what kind of service would be required if there were no poverty in the world. It is implied that poverty is necessary in order to furnish a basis for Christian living. This implication tends to emphasize to the poverty-stricken that they are needed victims for the practice of Christian service, and they, seeing themselves as "underdogs," breed a sense of shame. The greatest preventive of a loss of pristine and natural confidence would be any economic reorganization of society where poverty would no longer exist. The necessity of poverty can never be defended.

Much space could be devoted to the occasions in a child's life that pound out its early enthusiasm, and leave its mind nothing more than an apology. Without a summary of all of the occasions for a loss of this confidence, it is clear that childhood brings with it an unbounded confidence, but in the shuffling changes of the early years there is often a loss of this most needed quality.

V. WHY DOES A CHILD LOSE ITS CONFIDENCE?

It may be asked why a child easily loses its confidence, especially since adults may continually receive rebuffs and yet maintain their courage. It may be argued that a child is still inexperienced with the real tragedies of the world. Its troubles are little ones. While a difficulty may break its heart, it is all over the next hour, or surely the next day, as though nothing happened. It seems that the native enthusiasm of the youngster is irrepressible, even if it has an occasional setback.

True it is that the natural enthusiasm of the child is irrepressible, for a long time at least, but there is another factor to be considered, the open and susceptible mind of the child, which we stressed in a preceding chapter. The child tends to believe the first thing it hears on a new subject, as we mentioned previously (Chapter IX). This point is of extreme importance in considering the loss of a child's confidence. If the child is already fortified in its trust in itself, there is little danger. If he has started well in school and confidence has been maintained, it will be difficult for a school situation later on to kill this confidence. If a child has started well in playing with companions and is made to feel at home with them, it will be difficult later to kill this sense of importance; he will rebel and fight back. If a child in the home has had its own sense of worth respected until it is thoroughly grounded, difficulties of training that might follow will not easily have a bad effect. If a child's importance is threatened, he will show his independence and may even run away from home.

But all too often the first thing the child hears about its own worth is detrimental. As soon as he comes to understand words and even facial expression, such a youngster may be told that he is "dumb," "bad," "not worth much," that he "can't do this or that," that he is "in the way." This first impression is deepened by being constantly repeated. But it need not be repeated to be lasting in effect. A child is easily impressed by a statement concerning the place he has in the scheme of things. Belittling of a child's self when that is the first statement he hears as an estimate of his mind may affect him very injuriously through the power of suggestion.

When a child first mingles with his play group, the members may belittle him. This is often the first real estimate that the child has received of himself. He is humiliated, and that humiliation is mentally fatal.

It is the first impression of his worth that counts in the child, for it is believed implicitly with all the faith and openness of his pliable mind. We find that even adults tend to receive uncritically a first impression by way of suggestion. If there is no counteridea in the mind to combat or modify a new idea, the mind of the adult is almost as open as the mind of the child. In this sense no adult ever grows up. Since even adults tend to believe implicitly first statements with nothing to contradict them, it is not strange that a child may accept as final the first statements regarding his own worth.

VI. LACK OF CONFIDENCE MAY BE A PERMANENT EFFECT OF SUGGESTION

Having once received a bad impression of its own worth, the child may easily continue to accept the idea by suggestion. The idea may remain as it started, and no more deliberation is given to it than when it was first received. If a child thinks himself of little worth at the age of six, he will most likely think the same at the age of twenty-five or forty. It may become simply a habit of thought, and as a habit it is made an unconscious acquisition and continues by its own momentum. It becomes just one of those many things in the mind that are taken for granted, and a person generally doesn't reason about it any more than he reasons whether we should or should not have weather.

Scores of adults are crowding college and university classes in psychology; they are reading many books on the subject and are consulting psychologists about their dissatisfaction with themselves. They do not understand why they should not be more successful, or undergo a greater personal adjustment when they exert much effort in this direction. But they fail to see a possible unconscious obstacle in the way. How can they ever become successful or improve when they have never wrestled with the idea that they are of little worth in the world? Such people leave this idea entirely out of consideration. It is in the seat of absolute control, and is not at all noticed. It is holding back every intention to succeed, every wish to improve, and every method to rid the mind of slow progress. The idea of inferiority is unconsciously holding them back. It is the very cause of despair in futilely repeated efforts of many people to improve themselves—this unseen hindrance that blocks every pathway. If psychologists had to name one factor which most hinders mental improvement, they would probably name this uncritical belief in personal inferiority. A person deliberates about many things, but he may miss this lurking idea of being of little worth.

Of course, this idea is not in the center of attention all the time, but it is *always* in the center of attention when a man is confronting a situation that has to do with the question of self-importance. It then sharply and suddenly appears, and he does not analyze it with the searching power of reason. It is subconscious, therefore, not in the sense of being out of attention, but in being taken for granted. It is controlling him without his knowing it. If he is confronted with the question of responsibility, with the question of accepting a position that calls for much promotion work, with the question of accepting a chairmanship of a committee, with a question of attempting something new, with the question of making a difficult but wise journey, with the question of meeting new people, with the question of taking the initiative in leading people, with the question of attempting to write, paint, or sing—in all situations where resourcefulness, tact, ingenuity, and daring are concerned—this one bugaboo of a lack of confidence sticks itself squarely in the center of the mind and prevents the person from getting out of his mental rut. The idea entrenched by way of suggestion goes automatically into action. This behavior is the sort a person does not want. It is against his very desires and deepest cravings. But if bad suggestion is in control, all of his plans for improvement will go awry, and he will stay exactly where he is. Unearth this continual suggestion which works unconsciously, and improvement will be evident. An individual cannot consciously and deliberately plan advancement if he *suggestively* thinks the very opposite. Both cannot occupy the center of the mind at once. And the *stronger* one wins, namely, the early lack of confidence that has become habitual in his thought.

VII. WHAT DOES A LACK OF CONFIDENCE IMPLY?

We must define this personal drawback a little more carefully if we are to know exactly what we are trying to eliminate. What we generally talk about in respect to a lack of confidence is its *consequence*—our own efforts to prevent ourselves from getting ahead, or our inability to feel at home in a desired endeavor. This is its effect, but what about its essence? What is really the lack of confidence? What kind of a condition or state of mind is it? To answer this question is to furnish a clue to a remedy, for psychology, if it is to eliminate an evil, must first know its cause. A lack of confidence is a certain appraisement of oneself. It is a measurement of one's ability, capabilities, talents, leadership, initiative, brilliancy, and all of the various traits and conditions that make up a human mind. It is a certain "yardstick" that a person accepts for his own mind—a scaling or ranking of his own self.

But naturally *it is a poor estimation.* Even when a man knows he is under the power of bad suggestion, he rates himself poorly. A person lacking in confidence has a discouraging insight into the make-up of his mind, carrying with it a distrust of the self. It is a self-fear. Consequently, such persons lose that aggressiveness which Moore and Gilliland[6] investigated in their survey as the opposite of a lack of confidence. Whether of the extreme kind, such as an inferiority complex, or of the moderate sort, such as a fear of self only in regard to a few things, the subject thinks that the very constitution of his mind is of low order in regard to the factors for which he lacks *confidence.* His talents and abilities are thought to be of little worth. There simply is not good raw mental material, it is thought. The stone in the human statue is estimated to be of inferior grade. The person is "selling himself short," and this low price tag placed on himself is generally undetected. For certain items every person rightly knows he does not have ability, but this is not a lack of confidence. The latter is always a false self-appraisement.

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[6] Moore, H. T., and Gilliland, A. R., "The Measurement of Aggressiveness," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 5: 97–118 (1921).

We see, therefore, that the order of self-appraisement is wrong for a person who is lacking confidence. He does not properly analyze himself, and then, upon finding poor abilities, set a belittling stamp upon his mind. This would be fair and just, although disagreeable. But he reverses this procedure. And he does it for no just cause. He first belittles himself through faulty suggestion, which is nothing more than placing a low estimate on his abilities before examining them.

An individual burdened with self-distrust may easily say that if he had the ability he could venture into new fields, but he does not know that it is only blindness to his ability that sets up this state of mind.

VIII. REMEDY FOR A LACK OF CONFIDENCE

The reader should not be expected to find an easy remedy for a lack of confidence, for it is not easy to get rid of an old established habit of thought. A habit-suggestion deeply rooted in a person'slife and controlling his every move is not budged by a mere puff of temporary enthusiasm. However, the proposed remedy is effective and can work if people are willing to work it, or to undergo the needed effort. It is divided into six parts: first, a reappraisal of the self; second, the substitution of good suggestion; third, strengthening the idea of success; fourth, developing unusual skill in a job; fifth, getting whole-body exercise; and sixth, the substitution of "bold behavior."

A. Reappraisal of the Self

Every individual with a lack of confidence has been mentally cheated. The measure that was applied did not measure correctly. Such a person is always worth more than he thinks. There is a better quality of raw mental stuff in him, greater capacity, greater talent, greater ability, greater initiative, and greater leadership than he estimates. He has never thought nor acted to the best of his ability. Of course, no individual ever thinks or does his best, but the person who has no confidence is *too far* from doing so, especially when he lacks self-trust in respect to many things. He is operating only on part talent, and a very small part at that. He is merely puttering along with superficialities, with only poor exhibitions of himself, with the greater and better mind untapped.

A person lacking confidence is like a person with no mineralogical knowledge discovering ore. Instead of ascertaining its proper value, he says that it is merely lead and of little worth. He continues, however, to haul the ore to town and never receives much compensation in spite of the fact that it contains valuable silver and gold deposits.

The first remedy is, therefore, a true knowledge of self, free from bias. Let the person know himself by the best kind of controlled observation with no wrong idea that is taken for granted controlling the center of attention. The first real revelation will come with a *true re-estimate* of himself. The means are personality tests, personal conferences with intelligent and unbiased friends, and a *deliberate and impersonal* observation of his own behavior. It is the last that generally reveals a man to himself. With this he does not look *personally* into his mind, but as though it belongs to another. He is scientifically observing it without prejudice.

The author has seen many a young person with a poor measure of his own worth discover by impersonal observation that he is as good as another, even though he did not previously believe it; he thus discovered that he is as highly educated, has as much leadership, is just as creative, has just as much energy, as much ambition, has as high ideals and as good tastes as another. All this is as surprising and joyful as new discoveries are to the scientist in the laboratory. It is a new and teeming thing in his life and fraught with great possibilities. There is something about it that savors of a dream, for such a truth was thought impossible. This "another" may appear indefinite to the general reader, but it is not to the one lacking confidence, for he thinks of himself as lacking in ability as compared with those in the fields in which he wants to strive and succeed.

The Allports[7] say that those who seek a better understanding of themselves should profit by the use of the ascendance-submission reaction study since it affords an objective basis of comparison with other people of their own class. The principle is here emphasized that a person does not know himself until he compares himself with others. If a man uses a five-point scale in comparing himself with others in reference to such traits as general judgment, leadership, persistence, loyalty, dependability, intelligence, and others about which he is in doubt, he will be rewarded by good results. It is also interesting to note that even when confidence is not particularly lacking the subject does not know himself apart from people. A man alone cannot discover his own mind. He is too close to observe himself. He does not know, for instance, his own intelligence until it is measured *with* others. Since all measurements are relative, a person lacking confidence must use this relative means. The worth of this sort of test is seen in the fact that it destroys this taken-for-granted idea of a poor estimate of the self. The individual refuses any longer to accept this kind of an estimate by way of suggestion. It is held up for inspection. It does not pass the test of close scrutiny. In other words, it makes a man really observe his own self for the first time. The result of the test is inevitable. The subject *always* finds that he is not nearly as bad off as he thinks—he *always* comes out of this observation in a favorable light considering his total score. This is natural, since a lack of confidence forces a person grossly and pitiably to underestimate his own ability.

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[7] G. W. and F. H. Allport have devised forms for A-S reaction study. Forms, together with instructions, can be secured through the publishers, Houghton Mifflin, New York.

B. Adoption of a New Suggestion

After this first step of the remedy for a lack of confidence, the second can easily follow: namely, *planting unquestionably the new idea of worth in the center of the mind*, or at least in a position where it is ready to control the center of attention whenever the subject is confronted with the question of his own worth.

It is of no value to have a new idea of the self by means of suggestion if the old and wrong idea of the self is in the way. The latter would always win out. But by a new and favorable re-estimation of the self this false measurement is attacked and weakened. It is at least brought out of its hiding and given a battle. It is seen as false, untrue, and misleading, and is shown in its real light as something no longer to be taken for granted. Reason has seized and exposed it. Its hold is loosened. It is no longer bad suggestion, and hence the new idea of the self can have a free and unobstructed right of way. The obstacle has been sufficiently attacked for the new idea to work.

Once the new idea of the self has been centered in the mind all argument about it should cease, or the argument will weaken and destroy it. The period of deliberation should be over. Further deliberation is unnecessary and even dangerous. If deliberating about the new idea is allowed, then doubt is cast upon its worth; old habits creep into attention; it is then held up; no action results; hence, no good will come of it. Here is a case where good suggestion is psychologically the best course. Let the new estimate of the self be accepted *unconditionally* with perfect faith, with never a question as to its worth. Let it be the ruler in the center of consciousness. Hold it there and never let it waver. It will then *automatically* go into action and the subject inevitably act with confidence. An effort may be required at first to hold this new idea unquestionably as a matter of suggestion, for the old idea of the self may attempt to compete. But as the new idea grows in power by its own attractiveness, effort to hold it will slowly drop out. Often the old idea of the self does stage a "comeback," because the subject fails to hold the new idea of the self in perfect faith. He wavers in his belief in its worth and hence allows the old idea to gain attention. But as the new idea wins by its own worth and beauty, the old idea vanishes.

C. *Strengthening the Idea of Success*

A third way to help eradicate a lack of confidence is to go into some new endeavor in which success is certain. One of the most potent needs for the timid individual is success. He has had very little of it and it has come only at long intervals. His own underestimation of his ability prevented success. But let him do a few things with success guaranteed, as it were, and he will trust his ability a little more.

Some sales managers send a new timid salesman out for the first few days to prospects who are primed to buy from him. Teachers give little bashful Johnny something to do in the classroom which he can easily carry out, even if it is only passing out books or putting chalk on the blackboard rack. The wise public speaking instructor lets the novice make only short easy announcements to the audience. The foreman in the shop has a timid workman try out new things with but little chance to fail.

Rugged souls sometimes try to test the timid by giving them hard hurdles to mount. They feel that a hard fight helps. But the opposite is true. The first fight to kill a lack of confidence should be an easy one. If hurdles are present, they should be easy to mount. Rough going is only for the tough-minded and not for the timid-minded. A success venture eases a person into confidence. Hard obstacles coming later are easier to overcome with a little confidence than hard obstacles at first with no confidence. Give the timid individual a trial success—not a trial failure.

D. *Developing Unusual Skill in a Job*

Another aid for the building of confidence is to have the subject perfect his job until it is an advanced skill. This may already be the case, but most likely it is not, since the timid individual is not the most efficient worker.

Efficiency to the psychologist, as we have said, is not a matter of result, but a matter of performance. If an act is completed with ease, with excellent nerve and muscle coördination, then it is an efficient act, no matter whether the individual gets a nickel or a hundred dollars for it.

The person suffering from a lack of confidence, especially with an inferiority complex, has naturally a timid approach which spreads to all he does. When a person is timid, all he does is suffused with self-consciousness. This makes an act uncertain and clumsy. Almost everything that a timid soul does, especially something important, has a looseness about it as though it were slipping out of his hand. There is no firm grip on the act. Lack of confidence weakens the nerve current that impels the muscles. Confidence, on the other hand, strengthens the nerve current. Milton once said, "Confidence imparts a wonderful inspiration to its possessor."

So a needed help to the timid is deliberately to build up a job that may be called a pretty piece of skill. This should be easy to do, for the individual has already had plenty of practice in it. But he has stopped at the half-way point and the job is still too clumsily performed for reasons already given. Let him carry on the performance to a hundred per cent skill, or nearly so. Thus there is efficiency. This is what the timid soul needs. By underestimating his abilities he breeds self-consciousness. Because of his self-consciousness he unsteadies an act. But a well-performed, firm, skillful act breeds confidence. His previous clumsy acts convinced his mind erroneously that he had no ability along certain lines. Now a very efficient act, though coldly built up, reacts in the opposite way and forces a more optimistic judgment. This cuts a serious inroad into his timidity. A fine skill draws attention to itself and makes a timid individual more objective mentally. This enables him to get away from himself. A skill thus sets his mind in the right direction.

E. Getting Whole-Body Exercise

Henry C. Link[8] completed a survey in which he discovered that amusements, if they demand the complete use of the body, make for self-confidence. Games such as handball, volleyball, and tennis call for this total relaxation of the body. Timid people so engaged begin to drop their masks and open up mentally. They begin to talk freely, to comment on questions, to banter other players, and to provide a mental give-and-take as well as a physical one.

Timid persons are too tight in body—with too much tension present. A lack of self-confidence is a fear of the self, as we have mentioned, and fear seizes the body and cramps it. These timid individuals are too constantly in a cramped bodily state. They need bodily relaxation. This relaxation of the body makes nerve currents spread freely and without hindrance. Pleasure is derived from a free unimpeded act, and we may add that with pleasure comes confidence. Wholesome and whole-body exercise is one way of providing confidence. Witness the glow of confidence in one who has exercised freely in a certain direction.

It is not to be inferred that playing a game of volleyball will breed confidence in a fellow's job, but it will at least give him a "feel" of confidence and a realization that he is, after all, of some importance. Many starting in this direction will soon engender a habit of feeling their own general worth.

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[8] Link, H. C., *The Rediscovery of Man* (1938), Chaps. III and IV.

F. The Substitution of "Bold Behavior"

The new suggestion of confidence can be helped by what may be called "bold activity." This means a deliberate and arbitrary—but not a rash and conceited—effort to do things never before attempted because of a lack of confidence. It is arbitrary only because the heart is not in it at first.

The need for bold activity is readily seen because it is the *only* way to begin to develop the feeling of confidence. It has no "soul" in it. But though contrary to people's expectation of an easy remedy, it is the necessary first step to conquer fear of the self in regard to a certain shunned behavior.

As we have learned, feeling follows a new act. It never precedes it. Feeling always is a *sequal* to a first experience. And the fields of endeavor in regard to which individuals have no confidence are new to them, unless it be an old endeavor, such as public speaking, for which an individual has somehow substituted fear instead of a previously developed confidence. But even here public speaking would be looked upon as a new experience to be learned over again.

However, people in general who lack confidence do not realize this law of feeling. They are waiting for a glorious urge to strike them before they tackle the thing of which they are afraid. "If I only *felt* like it, I would do it," they say. But waiting for this feeling will be in vain. It will never come by waiting, but only by *doing*, just as the swimmer will never engender confidence by sitting on the bank. He can get it only by swimming, and his first and perhaps tenth plunge is a matter of "gritting the teeth and going to it."

Yet this bold behavior reacts on the mind and strengthens the new idea of the self. Exercise makes confidence grow and take root even though the exercise of it at first is cold. An individual suffering from a lack of confidence should deliberately go up to new people at a reception and talk to them; enter an office and ask for a desired position; take the lead in speaking first to other people; take public speaking and deliver speeches; even attempt to sell goods; talk up first in a group and make proposals; walk confidently; look keenly and sharply into people's eyes as though unafraid. While this bold activity might be very much "against the grain," it will keep prominent in the center of the mind the new idea of the self. However, this bold activity should be carried out gradually, or discouragement will easily follow.

It is expression[9] that really makes an idea stick, and not impression. Thinking of oneself in a new way will result automatically in action if held by the power of suggestion, but any supplemental help will more deeply root in the new idea of the self. A man must act confidently until the new idea is set and a substituted behavior takes the place of a degraded type of approach. Right suggestion and *acting as if* one has confidence will soon engender a habitual confidence. Right thinking and right acting will sooner or later sweep away the old habit of false thinking and acting. "Confidence begets confidence," says George Herbert, and a part of this excellent principle is the assumption of a confident exterior.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why would confidence act like a new physical force in the body?
2. Why do methods of child rearing easily kill the self-confidence of the child?
3. What would aid in early restoring the sense of self-importance in the child?

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[9] James, William, *Psychology, Briefer Course* (1892), Chap. IV., p. 147.

4. How does the adult lacking confidence strengthen a poor estimate of himself?

5. Why is there an initial struggle in maintaining a new and excellent idea of self-worth?

6. Why do you think a mere *exercise* of confidence will finally make you feel confident?

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XIII

OUR FEARS

Mankind reverences those who have got
over fear which is so general a weakness.
SAMUEL JOHNSON

I. VARIOUS KINDS OF FEARS

As a logical sequence to our chapter on lack of confidence, it is desirable to include a discussion of fears. All people have them in one form or another. The higher the quality of mind, the fewer the fears. The lower the quality of mind, the more numerous the fears. Marshal Lannes once said, "No one but a poltroon will boast that he never was afraid." It is interesting to know some of the objects toward which the prominent men of the world showed fear.

The late Lord Roberts with all his military prestige feared cats; our own Professor James of Harvard was very much afraid of a bucket of blood; Edgar Allan Poe went through tortures of fear; the English writer, De Quincey, had nerve-racking nightmares; Pascal, the French philosopher and mathematician, would not pass a hole on his left side unless someone led him by the hand, or a chair was placed for him to lean on; Peter the Great had gooseflesh and tremblings when crossing a bridge; Scaliger, the noted Latin poet, would tremble at the sight of watercress; Bayle, the French philosopher, was afraid of the sound of running water; Francis Bacon, the great English philosopher and statesman, would faint during eclipses; James the First of England was afraid of the sight of a naked sword; Xerxes, king of Persia, feared the waves dashing against his ship and would lash them with chains; many noble Gauls charged in fear against the rising sea with drawn swords; Marie Antoinette became afraid of cake when this edible product became one of the witnesses against her in the trial for her life. Undoubtedly, every great personage has feared something. Alexander the Great of Macedon, ruler of the world at twenty-three, offered sacrifices to the gods before he went to battle because he feared their influence. Conquerors and rulers of ancient peoples erected temples and consecrated a priesthood to the god of fear. Tullus Hostilius, the third legendary king of Rome, ordered his consuls to strike off Roman medals, one of which was to bear the impression of a terrified woman and the other the impression of a man with hair on end and frightened, staring eyes. They were in remembrance of the vows made to propitiate fear, which threatened the ranks of his soldiers.

But fears are often temporary, and a fear, such as that of dying in battle, may never repeat itself. These we will not discuss, for they are too rare to constitute a problem. Other fears are recurrent but apply to objects that do not seriously affect an individual's daily routine or serve as a disturbance. The fears to be mastered are those which are problems and seriously handicap people in the pursuit of their daily tasks. Of these the question is asked: "How can I overcome my fear of the mountains, of dogs, of superstitions, of certain buildings, of swimming?" and countless other objects and situations. Practical psychology applied to daily problems before a class never fails to elicit a query about remedies for fears.

But fear comes in several principal forms and it is well to define the various kinds to avoid confusion:

First, there is the fear arising from a lack of confidence just discussed, which is being afraid because of lack of ability.

Second, worry is another species of fear, to be discussed later, which is an apprehension lest a calamity befall one's plans.

Third, there is a fear, not because of lack of ability or a threat to one's plans, but because of an anticipated or actual danger in an object, or situation, to one's own life in some respect. This class of fear is the theme of the present chapter.

Sully[1] defined the last type as the "particular emotive reaction which takes place through a sufficiently vivid and persistent representation of possible pain (harm) or actual evil."

Three classifications of the objects of this fear might be made:

(1) There is the class of objects or situations in which real danger lies—such as dynamite, a powder magazine, a battle, live electric wires, a falling tree, and many others.

(2) There is the class of objects or situations of which people are unreasonably afraid—called phobias from the Greek word for "dread." These may be centered on almost all possible objects. The name of this morbid fear is philologically obtained by prefixing the Greek equivalent for the thing feared to the word "phobia." For example, we have aerophobia (fear of airy places), astraphobia (fear of thunder and lightning), claustrophobia (fear of closed places and crowded rooms), agoraphobia (fear of open places), monophobia (fear of being alone), mysophobia (fear of filth), necrophobia (fear of death), ereutophobia (fear of blushing), metallophobia (fear of money), aichmophobia (fear of points), potamophobia (fear of water).

(3) Then there is the fear of oneself in some regard—and it is often a vague fear. For instance, a person with a feeling of insecurity has this sort of fear. This may be due to too much or too little love. If a boy is pampered at home and then goes out among boy friends who "take him down several pegs" by belittling him, he may develop a feeling of insecurity among people outside the home. On the other hand, if he lacks love at home by being neglected when another baby arrives, or by selfish, unloving

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[1] Sully, James, *The Human Mind* (1892), p. 91.

parents, then the feeling of insecurity could also arise. From this feeling, fear arises. The individual is afraid of what the world will do to him. He feels as unsafe as if he were in an actual danger-situation.

This fear is often indefinite in the sense that the possessor cannot always put his finger on any particular object or situation of which he is afraid. It is a floating fear. The author once had a consultation with a man who possessed this floating fear. He seemed more concerned over his inability to point to anything in particular that occasioned it than over the fear itself. He said he was "just afraid of everything." Analysis revealed a poignant feeling of insecurity arising from a childhood that promoted timidity.

Fear of insecurity is difficult to discover, for it easily disguises itself. A person suffering from insecurity may be unusually critical of people, extremely demanding of them, extremely sensitive, and may possess a habit of responding in the negative to people's suggestions. These attitudes may be attacked as the main difficulties without seeing that they hide a feeling of insecurity in the individual which is trying to bolster itself by making people go out of their way to satisfy him. Lack of romance, of power, of influence, of recognition, and of activity may also breed a fear of oneself, and be vague or indefinite and difficult to fathom.

II. HARM OF FEAR

A. The Physiology of Fear

Cannon[2] has investigated the bodily condition of people under fear. The heart beats faster, breathing is accentuated, digestive processes are retarded and sometimes entirely stopped, blood pressure is increased, muscle tension is increased, the speech organs are affected and the victim may utter random cries or be unable to say anything, energy is drained from the visceral organs to outside musculature, the automatic nervous system is disorganized and the sympathetic opposes the cranial and sacral divisions, the adrenal glands are very highly stimulated, the hair stands on end, the peristaltic movement of stomach and intestines are retarded and sometimes stopped, and many other extreme changes are wrought by fear.

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[2] Cannon, Walter B., *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear, and Rage* (1923).

These conditions are present in all emotions, but fear, at least in the pronounced stages, produces the most severe bodily seizure of any emotion.

Darwin[3] has given us a classic description of a man under the grip of fear:

> The frightened man at first stands like a statue, motionless and breathless, or crouches down as if instinctively to escape observation. The heart beats quickly and violently, so that it palpitates or knocks against the ribs, but it is very doubtful if it then works more efficiently than usual so as to send a greater supply of blood to all parts of the body; for the skin instantly becomes pale as during incipient faintness. This paleness of the surface, however, is probably in large part, or is exclusively, due to the vaso-motor center being affected in such a manner as to cause the contraction of the small arteries of the skin. That the skin is much affected under the sense of great fear we see in the marvelous manner in which perspiration immediately exudes from it. This exudation is all the more remarkable, as the surface is then cold, hence the term, a cold sweat; whereas when the sudorific glands are properly excited into action the surface is heated. The hairs also on the skin stand erect, and the superficial muscles shiver. In connection with the disturbed action of the heart, the breathing is hurried. The salivary glands act imperfectly; the mouth becomes dry and is often opened and shut. I have also noticed that under slight fear there is a strong tendency to yawn. One of the best-marked symptoms is the trembling of all the muscles of the body; and this is often first seen in the lips. From this cause, and from the dryness of the mouth, the voice becomes husky

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[3] Darwin, Charles R., *Expression of the Emotions in Men and Animals* (1910).

or indistinct or it may altogether fail. As fear increases into an agony of terror, we behold, as under all violent emotion, diversified results. The heart beats wildly or must fail to act and faintness ensues; there is a deathlike pallor; the breathing is labored; the wings of the nostrils are widely dilated; "there is a gasping and convulsive motion of the lips, a tremor on the hollow cheek, a gulping and catching of the throat"; the uncovered and protruding eyeballs are fixed on the object of terror; or they may roll restlessly from side to side. The pupils are said to be enormously dilated. All the muscles of the body may become rigid or may be thrown into convulsive movements. The hands are alternatively clenched and opened, often with a twitching movement. The arms may be protruded as if to avert some dreadful danger, or may be thrown wildly over the head. The Rev. Mr. Hagenauer has seen this latter action in a terrified Australian. In other cases there is a sudden and uncomfortable tendency to headlong flight; and so strong is this, that the boldest soldiers may be seized with a sudden panic.

Even if it be granted that fear has its place in the world, certainly every individual should extricate himself as soon as possible from a fear-seizure, or acute harm to the body will result. Digestion would be ruined. There would not be sufficient nerve and motor coördination to make anything attempted a matter of skill or efficiency; thinking would be seriously impaired, for this "gift to man" requires a quiet nervous system for its functioning; personal dignity and sense of worth would be blotted out as the man cringed from forces that appeared to endanger him.

B. Fear, a Mental Retreat

Fear by its very nature is a flight mechanism. It is obviously a running away from danger or a thought of running away, but the layman does not readily understand that those whose minds are honeycombed with fears are running away from reality, or the many rightful demands of society. They are retreating from the social battle front and refuse to engage in positive, constructive endeavor because of being afraid. They will not seek reality and be cordial instead of being critical to bolster a feeling of insecurity; they will not seek reality and build up true romance instead of retreating and finding it in dreams; they will not seek reality and build up prestige instead of finding it in odd and hidden places; they will not tackle many problems of life because their fear of insecurity drives them to a sheltered cave; they retreat from men and places and assume the negative attitude of "lying low" and doing nothing. If personality is to be developed by a socialization of the mind—by a positive approach to people—then people riddled with fears are lessening their mental development. The more fears a person has the less he develops.

C. The Use of Fear

1. *The helpfulness of fear where strength of body is needed.* Darwin and others look upon fear as a mechanism to take us out of a physical crisis. Cannon[4] represents this idea by saying that it is a safety device—the increased vigor of the heart, the elimination of the effects of muscular fatigue by added amounts of adrenalin in the blood, and all the visceral changes make the "organism more effective in the violent display of energy." Crile says it contributes to motor efficiency by massing "every atom" of energy upon the muscles. Without the fear mechanism, man in the long past would not have had a special biological provision to escape danger. The extra stimulation of the body in fear calls forth extra strength to enable an individual to escape. Without stronger legs he could not run fast enough from an attacking animal, or an exploding steam boiler. Fear is nature's contribution to aid man in his fight for self-preservation.

But it may be asked, "Just how many situations does a man face today in regard to which brute strength is the way out?" If a man faces a tiger without a weapon in the wilds of Africa and is about to be attacked, added strength given through fear might enable him to climb a tree very fast and escape. If a building is about to fall, an added strength given an individual through fear might enable him to escape death. If attacked by a thief, an added strength given through fear might enable the victim to knock him down and escape. But how many times during a person's life is strength at a premium? An individual does not need added strength to cope with an audience, to make a trip, to speak to a man of prominence, to take a swim, to sleep in a dark room, to go out in an open square, to kill a spider, to go through a forest, to handle a snake, to assume a chairmanship of a committee, to be constructive in religion instead of making it a shelter, to ask for a raise in wages—and in regard to a thousand other objects and situations.

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[4] Cannon, Walter B., *op. cit.*, Chap. XI.

If nature's provision of fear with its added strength is necessary in threatened or actual danger of body to get out of the crisis, then fear is biologically justified. Then we might experience it without the least prick of conscience. But if *strength of body* is not the issue, then fear has no justified place. If I am afraid of an audience, what is there to escape from? No need here of saving one's life, for life is not at stake. Fear in this situation, and in thousands like this where there is no physical life at stake, is only a hindrance. It prevents developing talents, efficiencies, and activities positively so that individuals can express themselves. Fear of this sort limits living, for it is only by the positive attack on problems that we experience the thrill of life. Living is "going after things" and not retreating from them.

2. *The uselessness of fear as a warning.* Some justify fear on the ground that it is like pain, a warning that something is dangerously wrong, or about to be. Others say that it serves as a caution to keep us from mistakes, evil, or violating the laws of convention or nature. Even Samuel

Johnson said, "Fear is implanted in us as a preservative from evil." Henry Taylor said, "Fear is the mother of foresight."

But here we have a confusion between real caution and fear. The former is needed to make us take care lest we make mistakes, be injured, killed, or neglect a serious obligation. But why is fear necessary to warn us? Could not caution, a cool, poised condition of mind, do just as well? I may suddenly come upon a big, dangerous hole in the road, but why should I show fear in order to walk around it? I need to provide for my family in case of my previous death, but why should I show fear in this respect? I need to be very careful in living up to the demands of my community that I be cordial, for instance, but why should I show fear in this regard? I need to be very careful in handling live electric wires, but why should I be frightened about it? Would not caution provide this needed care without the disrupting and disorganized effects of fear?

3. *The disintegration of activity through fear.* Fear cramps and at times paralyzes activity. Even in a flight from a bear, the running activity is certainly not of the first order of integration. Fear stifles proper expression. It violates life, which is a positive, creative reach. Hence, those individuals with innumerable fears crowding in upon them are making of life a retreat instead of an advance, and in so doing are contradicting the law of normal response. Fears are not natural, with the possible exception of a few needed to give us extra strength to get away from bodily danger.

III. SOURCES OF FEAR

Four sources will be listed. The *first* source is obviously people and places that occasioned a fright in us when children. A man who scares me at three or four years of age will be an object of fear for many years and perhaps for life. A fire which burned and injured me very severely may be something I shall always fear.

A *second* source of fear is the conditioned reflex, which was explained and illustrated in Chapter II. We do not realize how many fears are developed by means of the conditioned reflex. Watson[5] experimented with babies to test the origin of fears. "Albert B," for instance, was happily playing with a white rat when Watson struck hard a heavy iron bar hanging over the baby's head. Immediately the baby showed fear of the rat. Suddenly dropping or pulling off the bedclothes will also naturally bring forth a fear in the baby. Watson drew the conclusion that the only two natural stimuli to create fear in the child were a loud noise and a lack of bodily support. Other fears were acquired by means of the conditioned reflex. It is interesting to note that fears naturally created by a loud noise or a lack of support have to do with auditory and muscular stimuli. Watson did not find any visual stimulus that naturally made the child fear. But what a big array of visual stimuli now bring forth a fear-response! Evidently all visual fears are acquired. All fear-objects of touch, smell, and taste are also acquired.

Let us illustrate now the mass of fears mechanically built up in the child. Let us start with a thunderstorm as a main stimulus, as represented by the right angle corner in Figure

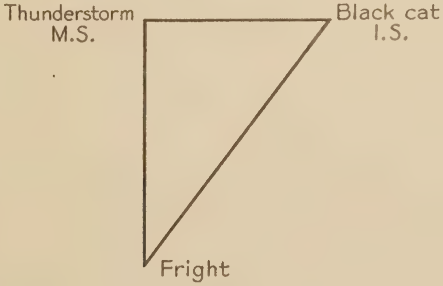

Figure 19.

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[5] Watson, John B., *Behaviorism* (1925), pp. 125ff.

19. Let a black cat which incidentally ran across the child's path during the thunderstorm be represented as the incidental stimulus. Here we have the conditioned reflex setup with the child becoming afraid of the black cat because it was associated with the thunderstorm which naturally produced fear.

Picture now how uncannily and subtly fears are built up in the child from this basis. If the cat itself produces fear, it may become a main stimulus. And if it is a main stimulus, anything else that may be incidentally associated with it may produce fear. For example, the child may see this black cat drinking milk out of a yellow bowl on the floor, and this yellow bowl may thereafter become an object of fear and, thus, a main stimulus. But yellow bowls are used frequently in the kitchen, which in turn becomes associated in the child's mind with yellow bowls. The kitchen itself, consequently, may occasion fear in the child, and it becomes a main stimulus. But associated with the kitchen are the dishes, pots and pans, and other utensils. These in themselves may produce the reaction of fear. In the course of time, let us say, a man with a certain contour of face enters the kitchen. The kitchen, being a main stimulus for fear, would serve as an occasion for anything associated with it to become an object of fear. Consequently, this visitor in the kitchen may set up fear in the child, and if he talks in a loud voice, the child might be additionally excited to fear.

Let us take the child out of the kitchen and place him in his nursery. A window blind, during a windstorm, is released from its spring and rolls up with a bang. It occurs in the darkness of the room. Since a loud noise naturally creates fear in the child, the darkness associated with this sound may produce fear. The child thereafter may be afraid of the dark. The mother tells it bedtime stories that are "crawly and creepy." Since these are associated with darkness, of which he is already afraid, the child thereafter shows fear of any story that savors of mystery, spookery, or ghosts. The reader can thus see that the child goes on and on unconsciously forming his fears. We are almost inclined to say that the child develops fears *ad infinitum* of particular objects (beyond noise and lack of support) that are quite new, no one of them being a matter of inheritance.

Another fact in the functioning of a conditioned response, as we know, is that not only objects incidentally associated with the main stimulus may in the course of time produce the same response, but anything that is like the conditioned stimulus. Watson found that his infants became afraid of white rats through the conditioned response, but then he found that they were afraid of all kinds of furry animals which they had not seen or heard before. If a child becomes afraid of candy, anything that looks like candy will elicit fear. If it becomes afraid of a certain sound, anything like it will make it frightened. Another thing to bear in mind in connection with the condition reflex is that the sources of our fears are soon forgotten. Few of us can show why we are or were afraid of certain things. Can a child when grown to adulthood explain why he is afraid of a golf bag? Can a woman explain why she is afraid of a man of a certain height. Can she explain why she is afraid of a cupboard? Can a person explain fear-reactions to cooking utensils? Can a great business captain explain why he shows a fear-reaction to a man who comes into his office wearing a dark brown suit? If such individuals are acquainted with the principle of the conditioned response, they know that these fears were undoubtedly engendered according to its law, but they do not know in what way.

The conditioned response is not a matter of a reminder. The thing that sets off our fear does not *remind* us of the main thing that first did it. It is natural, therefore, that we do not know how a great proportion of our fears were created. Their sources are hidden in total oblivion or in the subconscious region of our being. This factor makes the elimination of a person's fears a very difficult problem.

Without knowing the source or cause of a certain fear, it is hard to get rid of it, although we must resort to remedies despite our ignorance of these sources.

The third source of fears is through contagion. The child may become frightened at dogs because other children do. Even adults may become frightened at a strange object huddled in a corner, if others do. Ghost stories spread their fear at a campfire gathering, as people display it. Even saying that certain things are to be feared may produce a fear of them. Reciting the fearful effects of certain objects, conditions, and fetishes of superstition spreads fear as if it were an epidemic. Countless fears are provoked in this manner, and to get rid of these troublesome superstitions would be a relief to mankind.

Another kind of contagion that spreads fear is faulty teaching concerning the world and society. Many a child has been frightened with fears because he has been falsely taught that life is a menace harboring all kinds of evils that threaten and hinder.

The fourth source of fear is suppression. When a fundamental want is blocked, whether love, romance, prestige, activity, companionship, or adventure, it makes for insecurity and uncertainty. A person feels small when disappointment meets his deep desires. It takes away his pride and confidence. It makes him feel like a prisoner deprived of his rights. This lack of confidence takes away his strength of initiative and he becomes afraid of adventure. Suppress a child sufficiently and it will become a fearing creature. Block the urges of an adult and he becomes apprehensive as to what is in store for him.

IV. REMEDIES FOR OUR FEARS

A. Stop Defending Your Fears

(1) The first attitude to adopt in eliminating fears is to stop defending them and realize fully and clearly their

futility, except as a physical escape-mechanism in time of actual bodily danger. To defend fears otherwise is to root them more deeply in our nervous systems. This defense is often an alibi or a rationalization to cover up our reluctance to part with our fears. In spite of their inconvenience, we become rather accustomed to them. There is a certain smugness in old habits even though they are bad. Yet to defend fears by a rationalization tends, if done enough, to make us believe our own excuses; consequently we grant greater quarter to fears, and hence, drive them deeper into our natures. Face fears candidly and realize what they really are. This is the first step toward elimination.

(2) Thoreau said, "Nothing is so much feared as fear." The second method, therefore, is to eliminate the fearing of fear itself. Otherwise a person is completely blocked in his efforts.

Fearing of fear is an actuality, and not "mere imagination." There is such a thing as being afraid that we will be afraid. What is it? It is an actual upset of the body that a person induces by expecting that he will be afraid of a certain object or condition. Thinking that he will be afraid of a certain stimulus works by way of suggestion. This is a fear-thought, and is very disturbing. It is planted in the focus of consciousness; it is unreservedly believed; it is accepted on faith; there is no doubt in a person's mind that he will show fear; it has no rivalry; hence it automatically goes into effect. By the principles of suggestion, such a result is inevitable. Expect fear and it comes before we meet the fear-stimulus. A man, *by his own suggestion*, is frightened before he faces his audience, before he sees his prospect for a sale, before he goes into the cemetery of a dark night, before he proposes a plan to a committee, and in many other situations. It is a case of crossing a bridge before coming to it. Countless fears are thus manufactured by this suggestion-expectation. We have frightened our own selves because of our state of mind, and have done so before meeting the object. An emotion can be aroused not only by an external stimulus or by the emotional situation, but by an idea, be it memory or anticipation. A thought of an insult yesterday may arouse me, or a thought of one tomorrow may arouse me. So an idea of a coming fear may create an anticipatory fear.

There is no doubt but that these fears created by fearing fears are very often more intense than those created by objects, if the latter could be segregated. Fearing our fears deadlocks us. We can then never overcome our fears of objects because our manufactured fears get in the way. There is, hence, a constant obstacle.

The state of mind to be adopted, if possible, in overcoming fears is to train ourselves not to expect fears, and to keep a calm mind before facing a fear-producing object. This is certainly a first prerequisite. If we are to react with fear, let the stimulus-object produce it and not ourselves. The impersonal attitude should be adopted in regard to our own fears. I should not expect a fear when facing an audience just because I had one yesterday.

(3) Compensations may not compensate. Often a fear is hidden by a person assuming a bravado spirit, or by a rationalization. An employee may be afraid of his employer. When in his presence, he is afraid to express his convictions, but when away from him, he may assume a very bossy air to those about him. To all of his subordinates and equals he is dictatorial. It may be objected that a man should assume a confident mien, but the trouble with this situation is that he doesn't do anything at all to overcome his fear of his employer. He covers it up with a compensation of braggadocio to make up for his humiliation before the man who hired him. This mechanism will never cure him of an employer-fear.

Another person is afraid to speak up in class. He rationalizes and says that others take up too much time, that he cannot contribute anything, or that the professor does not want his students to comment on the lectures, but simply be silent listeners. This sort of defense gives him a partial relief. It is a tension-reducing mechanism. But again, it is a cover-up. He seizes whatever comfort he can from his rationalization, and consequently lets his fear of class response remain as it is. He does not tackle it outright, but tries to circumvent it by an indirect route that does not solve the problem.

Compensations that bolster a man's pride for his loss of self-respect in showing fear may be just escapes, and the issue is not faced. Compensations like a brave bearing in an actual fear-situation are very helpful, but not when they are flights from the scene of danger.

B. *The Conditioned Reflex as a Remedy*

We have already explained in Chapter II the conditioned reflex as a possible remedy for the elimination of fear. One caution needs to be made again that when the fear to be overcome is to be made an incidental stimulus to a pleasant main stimulus, it must be characterized in at least two ways: first, it must not have any logical connection with the main stimulus; and second, at first it must not be prominent in attention, but kept in the background and only gradually brought into prominence—otherwise it will become the principal stimulus, and then the principle of the conditioned response will not apply.

C. *The Principle of Catharsis*

Aristotle,[6] the Greek philosopher, expounded the theory that people like drama or tragedy because the very act of witnessing a tragic play gives the spectator a sense of relief. He acts out his angers, his worries, his problems, and his sorrows with the actor. So in respect to fear. We like to see a fear-producing situation performed on the stage because in so doing we get rid of our fears; we clean and purify our minds. There is also the element of safety a person feels in witnessing a fear without being in it. We like such a security. We are in it and yet we are not actually threatened. Aristotle called this mental relief a "catharsis." We do two things in this catharsis: we say over to ourselves the words of the actor, and we go through the actions of the actor in incipient form.

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[6] Aristotle, *Poetics* (translated by S. H. Butcher in *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, Chap. VI).

Aristotle's theory is generally accepted to explain our love of the tragic on the stage. It explains why the public likes to see a mystery play with all its hair-raising thrills; it explains why boys like to hear ghost stories around the campfires; it explains why some people like to go to sleep picturing terrible possible things about themselves.

But this principle of catharsis has been successfully applied in getting rid of actual fears. Persons with strange fears with no memory of their origin have had their memories recovered by hypnotism, by free association (which means letting the mind wander at will, expressing any thought that comes to mind), by constant probing by a psychiatrist or psychologist, or by another who remembered the event. When the actual fear-situation is recited or told, even though it is not actually present, there is a diminishing of the fear, and often its abolition. Of course, with the recital of the fear-situation there is also the incipient acting-out of the fear and often the open simulation of it.

Rivers[7] tells of a medical man who had a phobia of being in an enclosed space, due to his sleeping next to a wall as a young child in a box-bed with his brother. He could not explain the terror. But after recovery of his forgotten experience he was able to sit without disturbance in the center of a crowded movie theater.

Fisher[8] tells of a woman of twenty who had a phobia of running and splashing water since she was seven years of age. It was so intense that at times three members of the family had to hold her to give her a bath. The origin of it was when she ran away alone from a picnic and was found by her aunt wedged between two rocks with water splashing over her head. The aunt heard of her phobia and recounted the incident; then the patient recalled it and the fear disappeared.

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[7] Rivers, W. H. R., *Lancet* (August 18, 1917).

[8] Fisher, V. E., *An Introduction to Abnormal Psychology* (1929), pp. 180–181.

Bagly[9] tells of a man fifty-five years of age who had a fear of being grabbed from behind and kept looking over his shoulder constantly to see if someone were about to seize him. Its origin had been forgotten. When a boy he had stolen some peanuts from a groceryman who grabbed him from behind, and he fainted. Upon a recall of the origin the phobia disappeared.

Shaffer[10] tells of a girl who had an intense fear of eyes. When she was young, she visited some relatives and started to explore the house. In pulling out a bureau drawer she saw a pair of eyes staring at her; they belonged to her blind aunt. She never told anyone about the fear until she was grown to young womanhood when she recited it to a psychologist. She was made to recite it many times and to recognize that there was nothing disgraceful in her opening the bureau drawer. The telling of her experience diminished the fear and in after weeks she had little trouble with it. It appears that in this case the subject remembered the origin of her fear. The main point, then, about it was her *recital* of its origin, and not a forgotten experience.

Many other illustrations could be given of the application of the principle of catharsis. If the incipient rehearsing of a tragic scene as one watches a play gives relief, the overt recital of a real fear should give relief. Accordingly, it is very probable that rehearsing any fear over and over again will kill its sting. This deliberate recital time and again will make it very familiar and take away its strangeness. Then it will be *assimilated* into the person's life as just another routine behavior in which there would be no terror. Overcoming a fear by the recital method would then be a combination of catharsis and assimilation, when the latter means being so well acquainted with a thing that it is no longer strange.

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[9] Bagly, E., *The Psychology of Personality* (1928), Chap. III.

[10] Shaffer, L. F., *The Psychology of Adjustment* (1936), pp. 203–205.

Another explanation of the effectiveness of the recital method is that it is something like the negative method of Dunlap described in Chapter II whereby one breaks a bad habit by doing it. As we there discussed, this performing of a habit to overcome it is *deliberate* and calls for *control* of the habit-situation. To deliberately stutter, for instance, a man really controls his throat muscles and makes them perform as he wants them to. So too when someone deliberately calls up and recites his fear with an incipient or overt repetition of it, then he exercises control of the fear instead of the fear controlling him. It is this mastery of a fear that probably helps to eliminate it.

D. The Re-Thinking of the Fear Stimulus

Often a reconsideration of a fear-stimulus will remove its danger or a threat of one. Fear is essentially a retreat for safety, and if we discover that there is nothing to run away from, then fear should lose its hold. This is what often happens. We mentioned that many fears arise from superstitions and false teachings concerning the universe. Let us see how a careful thought-examination of superstitions and false teachings about the universe may so expose the inanity of many of our fears that our pride will not allow us to keep them. Emerson said, "Fear always springs from ignorance."

One of the best starts in the way of curing oneself of fear-superstitions is to hold them up for close scrutiny and investigation and see clearly how they were developed, and how the mind has been duped for centuries into thinking that there was "something to the idea." It may be said that most superstitions go back to the savage's idea of sympathetic magic; and a great many of the remainder to a principle which logic calls *post hoc, ergo propter hoc.* Sympathetic magic is based upon the principle of analogy. It was thought that if a certain power or spirit was in one thing, it would also be in something like it. This is apparently good logic, and science follows the principle of analogy; but, as we shall see, sympathetic magic is very crude in thinking that a certain evil spirit is present in things that are alike, or is present in any form, and can thereby connive against individuals. For instance, it was easily seen that grain had a rapid growth in a spot of ground soaked with the blood of a sacrificial victim. Such "evidence" convinced the savage that the gods were pleased with the sacrifice of sheep or goats. According to the principle of analogy, why wouldn't they be better pleased with the sacrifice of human beings? What would work in the one case would work still better in the other. Rain occurs in association with black clouds and thunder and lightning. Why couldn't rain be produced, therefore, with something that was like these elements? So the savage would knock his firebrands together to imitate lightning, drum on a kettle or a hollow instrument to imitate thunder, raise a black cloth in the air or walk up and down with a black animal to imitate darkness, and sprinkle water from his finger tips to imitate rain.

It is said to be bad luck to meet a funeral, to dream of a coffin, to open an umbrella in the house, to see a shooting star, to see a spark fly out of the stove, to hear an imaginary knock on the door, to lie down on the table, to have an article fall from a high place, to have a clock stop suddenly, to see the sharp end of a pin pointing at you, to receive the gift of a sharp-pointed instrument; also falling leaves, the ebbing away of a stream of water, the setting of the sun, and the last quarter of the moon are objects of superstition. Two people going around opposite sides of a post, a crossed knife and fork, the flying of birds away from a church at the time of a wedding mean bad luck. The barking of a dog with head downward at a time of illness is a very bad sign. It is bad to move a person who is sleeping or is unconscious. The spilling of salt is a bad sign. The breaking of a mirror dooms one to seven years of misfortune. Hundreds of other examples can be given of superstitions. Any reader can add ad nauseam to this list, but these few illustrations will serve to explain their origin, for the principle of analogy or sympathetic magic runs all through them. Meeting a funeral is analogous to meeting disaster, and hence disaster will follow. To dream of a coffin is to enact death and imitate it, and the spirit of death would, therefore, be in anything that is like death. To open an umbrella in the house is associating it with rain, and rain with tears, and tears with trouble. Shooting stars and sparks indicate the going out of life, and therefore somebody is to die very soon. The imaginary knock on the door is like the knock of death. To lie down on a table is to imitate a corpse and this would mean death, for by the principle of analogy the spirit of death is transferred to anything like it. The sudden dropping of an object from a high place signifies death because the latter is likened to a fall. The sudden stopping of a clock is like the sudden stopping of life. A sharp point means injury and possible death, because such things or their like are used to bring about injury and death. The falling leaves, the ebbing away of water, the last quarter of the moon, and the setting sun are like the ebbing away of life, and therefore signify death. The soul of Barkis in Dickens' *David Copperfield* went out with the tide. Two persons going round on opposite sides of a post suggest parting; this therefore signifies bad luck. A crossed knife and fork are like a cross, which means sorrow. The flying of birds away from a church at a wedding is like the escape of souls from earth. The barking dog at a time of sickness is waiting to receive the soul of the patient, and the barking with its head downward suggests the body of the patient being sent downward into the earth. The moving of a person who is sick or unconscious is likened to separating the constituents of his personality. The soul was thought to leave the body in dreams and sleep, and too much of a disturbance was like shaking it out of the body permanently. The spilling of salt is like the spilling of friendship, because salt, being such a difficult element to obtain in the past and even in some parts of Africa today, was used as a symbol of friendship and as a tribute to the gods. Its spilling would be like the spilling of the thing that it symbolized. The breaking of a mirror means misfortune and is like a crashing of one's plans; but people forget that at one time mirrors were very expensive and it took the careful savings of many years to buy one.

The false logic of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* simply means that because two things happen to occur together in a situation, there is some casual connection between them. For instance, the fear of the number thirteen is said to be traced back to the life of Christ. His twelve disciples plus Himself numbered thirteen. His first twelve apostles plus Mathias, who took the place of Judas, numbered thirteen. There were thirteen at the Last Supper. With thirteen figuring so much in the life of Christ, which culminated in His trial and crucifixion, people thought that there was some connection between the number thirteen and disaster, especially when numbers were always thought to have some mysterious potency in them. The savage eats a new vegetable for the first time and immediately he is taken violently ill and dies. As a result, a connection is made between these two events, though the man might have died of heart disease even if he had not eaten the vegetable. The coming of a stranger into camp is followed by the loss of a battle. Of course there is no connection between the two, but the primitive man would naturally think there was. Hence there grew up the prejudice against strangers. The shooting of a certain animal for the first time is followed by a drought that brings great suffering to a tribe. The two are linked together in a causal relationship. We could go on and recite many instances where false logic was used to connect two events. Many of the superstitions that trouble us today are inherited from this kind of crude primitive thinking.

It is a fact that we fear many things because of our interpretation of the universe, whether worked up by conscious and deliberate effort, or unconsciously instilled into us as children. If modern man still carries over the crude conception of life and the world maintained by the savage, naturally he will make himself susceptible to all kind of objects interpreted as evil and threatening the events and even the life of the individual. To the savage there is not much friendship in the universe. Evil forces lurk everywhere—in the heavens, the stars, the clouds, and the winds; in the rocks, trees, and rivers; in sickness and death; in animals and vegetables; in dreams and sleep; and in everything that primitive man cannot understand. The gods have to be continually propitiated with gifts to keep them in a good state of mind, and to hold their wrath in leash. With such an interpretation of the universe, early man put himself in a cringing, cowering position of defense. He thought every turn of his life was threatened, even in cases where no tribal warfare was being waged, or any danger, sickness, or death was at his door. With many people today, the attitude toward the world is not much better than that of the savage. They simply cannot read friendship into the universe. They feel out of place as members of it, and think that everything is conspiring to destroy them. They consider themselves as outcasts with blood-guilt upon their brows, and the forces of the universe as bloodhounds in pursuit of them. It is a regrettable fact that many interpretations of the God of Christianity carry with them the thought and feeling of an unfriendly universe; that the Lord is a God of wrath and vengeance; that literal hell-fire and brimstone are awaiting the unrepentant sinner (many still believe this). Cringing fear must be continually manifested toward the "God of wrath" in order to appease Him and beg for mercy, even when the individual is keeping the commandments. With such a narrow interpretation of even the Christian's God, a narrow and fear-producing interpretation of everything else will naturally follow. Death itself is a fearful thing; queer traces of pagan and cruel beliefs are mixed with Christian thinking when people look upon the stars as determining man's destiny. Life is necessarily interpreted as a hard and cruel thing, and heaven itself is considered nothing but a release from the weary toil of earth. With such a belief there can be very little rest, enjoyment, or happiness upon earth. The unfriendly universe will not permit it. Fears forbid.

E. *The Re-Thinking of a Useless Remedy*

Individuals are attempting indirect methods of attack that incur more tension than their fears. They are thus making matters worse. Let us illustrate with the vague floating fear of insecurity. Deprived of affection in the home in childhood, the child's craving for affection is suppressed with the attendant loss of safety or security. Fear arises, as we previously mentioned. But to make up for this feeling of insecurity a man adopts wrong tactics. He criticizes people; he becomes sarcastic; he is unusually sensitive. Why? He is trying to receive recognition to compensate for his lack of affection in his childhood. He wants others to do as he thinks, and if not, he finds fault. His sarcasm is a bid to dominate and bring notice to himself. He is sensitive and he wants unusual solicitation from others. But his methods are negative and antisocial. Antagonism is developed and constant tension intervenes between himself and people. These attacks are indirect motives that do not solve the difficulty. It we desire security and a freedom from fear, the way is through cordiality. It is sociability that casts out fears, and not its opposite. The vague fear of insecurity is never allayed by antagonizing people. It is thus only made more firmly rooted, compelling the individual vainly to repeat and repeat his negative methods. He feels more and more insecure by the attitude of people which he has fostered and this compells him to overdo his negative attack.

F. The Positive Approach

The last remedy for fear is handling the object of fear. It is the oldest and most successful of all fear remedies and many testify to its success. Emerson said, "Do the things you fear and fear will die." We saw it working very well when the farmer used to lead his horse to a piece of paper, or umbrella, on the side of the road and have him smell and touch it. Dogs lose their fear of certain objects in the same manner. If there were an apparition in front of a man, his fear would be quite diminished and probably disappear the more he actually touched and handled it, if this could be done. Handling snakes, toads, lizards, and other animals that inspire fear have killed a fear of them. Peter the Great threw himself off a bridge into the water to cure himself of a fear that gripped him when he crossed water. Visiting places of fear many times has cured people of fear of them. The author's attention was called to a man who cured his wife of fear of bottles by bringing dozens of them home and making her break them in the sink.

The explanation of curing fears by a positive approach probably brings in several elements. We know that fear is a shrinking from an object. This positive approach is just the opposite. Both cannot function at once, for almost the same nerve and muscle-patterns are used in both cases. It is impossible to approach and recede at the same time from an object. One or the other type of behavior must give way. And if the positive approach is persistently followed, the fear-behavior will have to disappear. Then the person actually sees that there is no danger in the fear-stimulus. This brings to his mind the principle of assimilation just discussed. This in turn leads him to define it in neutral or favorable terms. Moreover, the positive approach breeds confidence. The latter always follows upon aggression, as we discussed in Chapter XII. Confidence and fear do not lie down together. Of course, it is obvious that handling a dangerous and harmful object is a precarious method of eliminating fear. But most of our fears are of harmless objects, and for them the positive approach is a good remedy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree that in order to be cautious a person must necessarily have fear?
2. Describe a few fears based entirely on ignorance.
3. How may a fear become a habit?
4. How many times has fear been an advantage to you?
5. Can you name another vague fear like the one of insecurity?
6. Which of the fear-remedies have you applied and with what success?
7. Name some disguised fears.
8. Why is a fear of fear a mental deadlock?
9. Do some people enjoy their fears?
10. How much are morality and religion based on fear?
11. Can one justify fear from its bodily condition?
12. Might jealousy be connected with a fear of insecurity?
13. Is jealousy a negative method of dealing with fear?
14. How is a fear of guilt developed?

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XIV

MIND AND BODY

Mind moves matter.
VIRGIL

I. THE MIND-BODY RELATION

THE old traditional idea was that the body and mind were separate entities. They were together and affected each other, it is true, but only as two unrelated strangers. According to this separatist view, the body was thought to be a mere container for the mind, and was like a foreign substance. The body was regarded as an intrinsically depraved, corrupt stranger whose unholy flesh poisoned the mind with its sins and connivings. This was the early Christian conception, but it is not yet altogether a mere tradition.

The modern conception of the relation of mind to body is very much improved. According to this view, the body is not intrinsically depraved, is not born corrupt, but is only made so by corrupt living. No impulse in itself is wrong. The body also is thought to be in closer union with the mind and the former's activities are treated with respect. For instance, modern men do not abuse their bodies with fasting and torture; rather, they train the body in strength and health, for a healthy mind is thought to have a poor chance in an unhealthy body. Furthermore, the study of psychology and neurology has convinced modern man that as the body is, so is the mind, and also that as the mind is, so is the body. Ritter[1] expresses the same idea when he discusses the principle that to understand one part of a man, the interrelation of all parts must be considered. It is useless for practical purposes to attempt to understand *how* the body and mind are related. Whether one believes in interactionism, in psychophysical parallelism, in a modified form of the double-aspect theory, or in the organismic view, he will find himself hopelessly entangled in philosophical or metaphysical difficulties. The exact relation of mind to body appears incomprehensible. But in our daily experiences we assume that as mind does, so does the body, and vice versa.

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[1] Ritter, W. E., *The Unity of the Organism, or the Organismal Conception of Life* (two volumes, 1919).

But there is still a woeful ignorance of the closeness of the union between mind and body. People in general still think that they can maintain bad mental states without affecting the body, and mistreat the body without seriously influencing the mind. The correct conception of the close relationship of mind and body is considered to be the organismal approach. This states that mind and body are inextricably one—so close in union that the condition of the body or mind has a corresponding change in the other. A bodily effect somehow may have also a thought effect, and vice versa. Indeed, the writing of the phrase "mind-body" in a hyphenated form does not sufficiently express the intimate union of mind and body. The functions of the parts are determined by the whole. According to this concept, all the parts of man are tied together in a network, so that as one part functions all the other parts are affected. Mind cannot think or feel in its various ways without affecting the body as a whole. How, we do not know, as we said. A man cannot do anything he pleases with his mind as though it were an independent unity. Aristotle expresses this organismal idea when he speaks of the organism of man being a "single and indivisible principle of unity." It is essential, therefore, that since mind is so close to body, we discuss its importance in protecting or injuring the body. The physical welfare of people would be much improved if they understood and profited by the power that mind has over the body. Health is a joint product of the flesh and the spirit. In a following chapter we shall discuss the effect of mind on digestion. In the present chapter we shall treat the effect of mind on the body in general.

II. SUGGESTION INITIATING BODILY DISTRESS

Innumerable people are sick when there is nothing organically wrong or no impairment of organic structure. Then why do such people become ill?

It is a well-known fact that some medical students often "contract" a large number of diseases they study. In the first few months of the study of diseases they complain of their lack of energy and interest in their work. If they study malaria, for instance, they "get" it, and feel weary of body. If they study typhus, they lose their spontaneity. It is only after a long period of study that they discover that it is mostly suggestion that is playing a trick on them.

Bodily ailments can easily copy a person's thoughts. Flaubert, the French novelist, wrote of the effect of suggestion as he "lived with" one of his characters. "My imaginary people take hold of me and follow me, or rather, it is I who am in them. When I was writing *The Poisoning of Emma Bovary*, I had so distinctly the taste of arsenic in my mouth, was so thoroughly poisoned myself, that I vomited my whole dinner." A lady once told me that chewing candy while bathing her infected hands in strong antiseptic made her taste become very bitter—but this was probably caused by a strong sense of smell. Actors on the stage in tragic roles were at times so carried away with their unpleasant thoughts that their bodies were in actual misery, and they were ready for bed after the performance, instead of dinner at the Ritz.

Mrs. Brown attends the Thursday afternoon Ladies Aid.

When the program finally settles down into sewing, the tongues being to run very freely. The subject of Mrs. Jones's illness is introduced.

"What is the matter with her?"

"Tumor at the base of the brain toward the back of the head."

"Oh!" Mrs. Brown's eyes blaze wide open. Her mouth gapes in a terrible apprehension. "Tell—tell me, how old is Mrs. Jones?"

"Forty-eight."

Mrs. Brown gasps. "How long has Mrs. Jones had this trouble?"

"About a year."

"Just as I thought," thinks Mrs. Brown. "Tumors strike women at this stage of life and *I am just the same age*."

She rushes home and impatiently waits for her husband to come home from work. "John, John, I am going to have a tumor," is the first greeting her husband receives.

He is taken by surprise, but knowing his wife thoroughly says, "Well, go ahead and have it."

She retires, but cannot sleep. She gets up earlier than usual and awakens John. Forgetting the episode of the night before, he sleepily comes to the breakfast table. "John, I told you," his wife says.

"Told what?"

"That I would have a tumor. Look, *look*." John looks at the back of her head and there is a blanched spot. She speaks of a splitting headache. John is now aghast. Yet Mrs. Brown has no tumor.

George belongs to a family whose members are afflicted with heart disease. It generally begins when they are forty. When this birthday comes for George, it is a nightmare instead of a day of celebration. Sure enough, just as he suspected, his heart begins to flutter on his very birthday, and the flutter becomes so violent that he has to lie down. "Just as all other members of the family began," he says. For a few weeks he is virtually an invalid—a pale, anemic image of himself. He has about resigned from his work. He gives up his social life entirely. Yet his heart is in good shape.

Mrs. Todd expects pneumonia about the middle of January. For several weeks she is very fussy about drafts, or the least fresh air, and insists on wearing unusually heavy clothes. Several days before her predicted illness, she is very weary, demands plenty of attention, and takes great pride in assuring those about her that she is right in her expectation of pneumonia. People under suggestion are always right. Just as she predicted, she feels so bad at the start of her fatal week that she is confined to her bed. By the middle of the week she is so ill that a physician is summoned, and there is no doubt about her illness. Yet there is not a physical ailment.

A woman reads that slow and difficult speech is a sign of paralysis. She knows that paralysis runs in her family, and she gets the idea that she might have a stroke. One day she halts in her speech because of fatigue. In a few days her utterance becomes indistinct and remains so, although previously she enunciated clearly. Yet there is nothing organically wrong nor any sign of a paralytic stroke.

How could these people be racked in body, often with intense pain, if they are not physically ill? Because in all these cases—and thousands like them—they are suffering from bad suggestion. Bodily suffering can occur when there is no real disease present. And there is no doubt about this actual suffering. There is no such thing as imaginary pain in the sense that it does not exist. It is only mental in origin. An idea, wholeheartedly believed—without question—set in the center of attention, and given the exclusive right of way, will automatically produce its corresponding effects on the body.

The medical student fills his consciousness with nothing but ideas of disease. These so absorb his attention that his critical powers are not in operation. They possess him with their peculiar interest and before the student is aware of it they produce bad bodily symptoms.

Mrs. Brown planted the idea of having a tumor so indelibly in her mind that she actually had the symptoms of one. Of course, this idea did not work by itself. An emotion of fear accompanied her autosuggestion, and this combination worked havoc. Fearing a tumor brought a change in circulation. The network of tiny blood vessels at the base of the skull became constricted. Any emotion of fear constricts the blood vessels of the body, and, of course, particularly at the spot in question. She, hence, had a queer feeling at the back of her neck. But it was only a symptomatic tumor, and not a real or physical one. The same course was followed in the other cases cited. Symptomatic diseases can be produced by mind alone.

The mind can tremenduously influence blood circulation. A man who fears cool water because of a possible chill can feel comfortable if a "doctored" thermometer is put into cool water, which registers ten degrees or so too high. It is as though his heat receptors were stimulated and the blood brought to the surface. The state of mind changes the blood in the capillaries, or small blood vessels of the skin. Fear can contract them. Faith can keep them expanded. It is a natural explanation that Mrs. Brown could so lessen the blood supply in the spot feared about that this condition could easily cause a blanching and an anesthesia. Worry can turn a person white, and joy can turn him red. The well-known balance board experiment indicates the power of the mind over circulation. A subject is placed on a board which is perfectly balanced on a pivot. When the board is perfectly level, the subject is asked to work a mathematical problem. In a short while the blood is centered in the head and then the head-region tips the board down. He is next asked to think of his feet being in a treadmill, or of running a race. After a slightly longer time than in the previous experiment, the blood is concentrated at the feet and this end of the body will tip the board down.

The man with heart trouble produced it by his own suggestion. It is not surprising, if one understands this mental phenomenon of suggestion, that a person can actually find his heart "acting up" with a great acceleration and skipping of beats—and the only cause being an idea. It is a fact that anyone can disturb his heart by giving it too much attention. During the World War I, myself, had an idea that I had an "athletic heart" and would not be able to make the service. My own family physician turned me down because of my heart. Three examinations convinced me of my suspicions. I was not surprised, for at the time my heart was going like a trip hammer. Yet an electrocardiograph showed a short time after that the heart was organically sound.

The mind through the indirect influence upon the cardioregulatory centers can change the heart rate and the rhythm and strength of the heartbeat. A mind caught in bad suggestion can so convince a person through fear that he has real heart trouble that a very sick heart will surely be his lot. Certain criminals being executed have actually died of heart failure owing to the overwrought state of mind before the hangman sprang the trap, or the electrician closed the switch. Happy suggestion, on the other hand, strengthens the heart and regulates its rate and rhythm and, therefore, tones up the whole body.

Mrs. Todd also made her own "pneumonia" to order. She so deluded herself with the idea of being sick that she thought of nothing else. It possessed and obsessed her. If it should be asked why there are not more Mrs. Todds in the world, it is because others are not so suggestible. Naturally she would be sick, for she would not disappoint herself. Autosuggestion is very accommodating and always accedes to one's wishes.

An idea of having throat difficulty, if strongly held, may so affect a throat as to produce speech defects, especially that of faltering. The author has treated cases of stuttering which were nothing but suggestion. A farmer boy was brought to this office by his father; he had such a pronounced case of stuttering that only after an hour's conference could he freely utter a single word. He had an idea that he could not talk correctly, and he *was* right. In going back into his childhood, it was found that he got the idea he could not talk correctly because in his first few days at school when afflicted with a pronounced timidity he so hemmed and hawed in his speech that his schoolmates poked fun at him and said that he stuttered. This idea engulfed his whole mind and soon became a habit which unconsciously ruled his throat muscles for years. He was given training in good suggestion and was made to see that his voice difficulty was only a bad idea-habit. In a few months he was able to go out socially and even to talk fluently enough to propose marriage. Just today the author was met on the street by another former stuttering patient who was afflicted with the same kind of bad suggestion. He now talks so glibly that he is even selling vacuum cleaners!

Throat-clearing, for instance, is often pure suggestion. The author attended a religious service conducted by Billy Sunday when, at the height of his fame, he preached to fifteen thousand people at one meeting. A minute or two after he began his sermon, coughing in the audience became very pronounced. Mental contagion was doing its work. One or two with an actual sensitivity of the larynx cleared their throats and then hundreds followed. To the author it was not especially distressing, but to the high-strung, sensitive speaker it was torture. Sunday suddenly stopped his sermon and in no uncertain terms told the people that they must stop their coughing or leave the tabernacle. The coughing ceased like a sudden quieting down of a wave of the sea. Their own suggestion to cough was supplanted by another idea of the speaker. So influential was Sunday's countersuggestion—augmented, of course, by fear—that very little coughing was heard in the hour and a half before the sermon was completed.

It is true that some people can't ride backward, can't sleep on the right side, can't sit on the outside chair of a theater, without feeling strange; but most of these notions are pure suggestion. It is interesting to note that riding backward on a train may be more restful since there is not such a terrific bombardment of images upon the eyes, that tires people very quickly. Good suggestion can change all of these ideas.

III. BAD SUGGESTION AUGMENTS BODILY AFFLICTION

We also know that physiological ailments are accentuated by bad suggestion. A physician friend just told the author about one of his patients who has stones in her salivary ducts blocking all salivary secretion. She naturally is distressed by the secretory back pressure distending the ducts to a painful degree, but this distress is increased at the *thought*, *smell*, or *sight* of food. Here is suggestion entering. At such times she has very severe pain and has what the physician called "the greatest stomach-ache in the mouth you ever heard of." He volunteered the diagnosis of this *added* suffering by saying that it was purely psychic in origin.

The author is acquainted with a man in Kansas who lost all desire to live—a pitiably dejected figure. It was embarrassing to be with him. He had been to several physicians who did not know his trouble; the last one consulted, however, was very sure that it was cancer. After this last diagnosis, all hope fled. The patient had resigned himself to what he thought was the inevitable. Later his wife persuaded him to go to another physician who was convinced that his trouble was only flat feet—which proved to be the case. This latest news brought back to him his old vim.

Another acquaintance had what the physician diagnosed as gall-bladder trouble. The pain at the seat of the supposed ailment was severe and it kept growing worse. With every treatment and a further confirmation by the physician that it was gall trouble, the woman grew weaker until an operation was advised. Yet at the final treatment the physician completely changed his mind and said that the trouble was not in the gall bladder. Suddenly the patient felt a great relief although a minor trouble continued. The physician had unwittingly planted a bad suggestion in her mind and it was augmented by her own imagination with its concomitant pain.

Many a person has felt much better when told that he has just an ordinary bad cold, and not pneumonia. A high fever might be lowered when the patient is told that he only has the "flu" and not typhoid fever. A pain in the hip was not so severe when a patient was told that the trouble was simply a pulled ligament and not rheumatism. The imagination of people reaches to a dizzy height during an attack of illness until the physician arrives, allays bad suggestion, and consoles the sufferer with the news that his trouble is only of a minor character.

Physicians take up most of their time dispensing excellent and eliminating bad suggestion without administering a single drop of medicine; but it is worth the effort. Even in a very severe illness the physician is often handicapped in his treatment by the mental condition of the patient. In such cases bad suggestion is hampering nature in effecting a cure, and often the physician has virtually given up the case as a medical practictioner and become a psychologist. He informs the patient that the issue of the crisis is entirely up to him—whether he will or not to live—whether he is going to plant helpful ideas in his mind, or whether his bad mental state will tip the scales on the wrong side.

The reader may wonder why we are stressing suggestion as the principal cause of bodily derangement since we find other bad states of mind that appear to have the same bodily effect. But the keynote of most states of mind that badly affect the body is bad suggestion. A wrong idea is entertained without question; it in turn acts as a stimulus to set off an emotion which affects the body. Once these latter states are upon us, however, we nurse them along by bad suggestion. We think that we have a perfect right to maintain them. When a person fears a ghost, he believes that it is his right to do so. Of course, what is said here does not apply to cases where people entertain an idea of illness or bodily weakness with justification. But functional trouble is so prevalent that bad suggestion may be said to be the culprit that does the harm.

IV. SUGGESTION AND ORGANIC DISEASE

Much that is being said today of the effect of the mind on the body is exaggerated and unscientific. The claim is often made that organic disease, in which the organic tissue is actually damaged or even lacking, is cured by suggestion. Various cults vouch for such cures—and the startling healings that run into the hundreds at Lourdes, France, and at St. Anne de Beaupré in Canada, *appear* to testify to these results. Even a physician's certificate is said to be furnished at Lourdes to show that an organic disease has been healed. Lung tissue eaten away by tuberculosis has been instantly restored by curative waters, it is said, and the claim is even made that bones separated by the width of a finger have been instantly joined by the power of the mind.

Much controversy has raged over these supposed organic cures. Reputable men have offered proof, but equally reputable men have doubted it. A committee of the Church of England disputed statements that organic disease had been cured at Lourdes.[2] It is startling to hear that lung tissue can be instantly restored by power of the mind, even though the patient is impregnated with an unlimited religious faith, and to hear of widely separated bones knitting together by faith. Even the most credulous might have a doubt as to the efficacy of the cure.

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[2] Martin, S., *Secret of Lourdes*, p. 180.

As far as the best scientific information is concerned, there is not on record a single case of a strict cure of an organic disease by suggestion. An organic disease either heals itself—as it often does—or the healing is done with the aid of physical therapy or medicine. It is inconceivable that lung or bone tissue can be restored without the help of the body. And it is very difficult to conceive of disease germs being eliminated by the mind. They require the help of the body and also medicine, whose function is merely to aid nature in restoring a patient. Material means must cure a material difficulty. A state of mind *as such* cannot create bodily tissue. A man would hardly wager that he could inject millions of cholera germs in his body and then wait around for the mind to get rid of them. Even the most ardent faith healer would not dare to run such a risk. In all probability a cemetery mound would be the consequence.

It is true that cripples of long years standing have arisen from their invalid chairs, and people have dropped their crutches and rushed to the platform of a faith-healing religious meeting, exclaiming that they have been cured. And their upright walking or running position would appear to indicate that an organic cure had been wrought. But the credulously minded individual fails to take into consideration the tremendous emotional power or strength which a religious frenzy creates. Every emotion of exaltation adds tremendous strength to the body which could be of such a degree that it could enable the crippled to rise up and walk alone. But what is the consequence the next day when the excitement has died away if the disease is organic? Probably the old crutches, or wheel chair, have again been brought into use. Relaters of organic cures seldom state what happens to the patient the day or six months after the "miracle" meeting. With some faith healers, the same patient is cured as a yearly event.

But it should be remembered that the mind can be of splendid *indirect* help in curing organic disease, as we have implied in our reference to the physician facing a crisis with the patient in a wrong state of mind. While medicine and science do not say that the mind can cure organic disease, it may so tone up the body that this added strength may aid the final cure. But this effect is functional. It helps the nervous and circulatory systems and decreases the functional symptoms and transitory disturbances that accompany the organic disease. Good suggestion may build up the body *around* the disease, but it does not directly affect the trouble. This indirect aid is very important, yet this is not what the exponents of organic cures have in mind. They think the good state of mind itself affects directly the disease.

The author has just met a girl who actually believes that her "healing" religious sect is curing her of organic eye trouble. She is a pitiable refutation of such a belief. She has permanently removed her glasses and the result is a great difficulty in seeing. In addition, headaches and nervousness coupled with a bad digestion are her constant companions; her organic nervous affliction grows worse; and much twitching and shortness of breath are always present even when she avows that she has been cured. Her unintelligent faith certainly puts a strain on the Creator and one feels that the Supreme Ruler would not object in His mercy to her wearing glasses to relieve her weary, nervous eyes. Religion should be a consolation and not a dupe.

However, *so-called* organic cures which are really functional with no organic trouble must not be belittled. There is a mighty power behind these cures—it shows the power of suggestion at its best. In all likelihood all such cases are mental in origin. And there is enough of functional disorder to startle the world with cures when the effect of suggestion over the body is fully realized. Even the most hardened skeptic would be a little bewildered at the influence the mind has over body if he should witness the cures at Lourdes, or at St. Anne de Beaupré. No doubt exists but that thousands of cures are wrought by mental therapy and have been ever since the power of faith was recognized. Even in very recent years, cures have actually been effected by faith in the renowned cemetery of Malden, Massachusetts.

The layman is too inclined to confuse a fact with an explanation of it. It is one thing to point to a cure and quite another thing to explain it; and yet these have not been sufficiently distinguished. Almost all the controversy over faith cures has been about the question of explanation —not as to whether there *are* such cures. Too many attested and proved faith cures which lasted for months and years make a contradiction of such facts merely a matter of bigotry and ignorance. The few exceptions where the alleged cure did not take place does not vitiate the *fact* of many cures by only mental means.

The simple-minded person likes to think that it was an organic disease that was cured; but the scientist is convinced that it was only functional—entirely a question of explanation of fact and not a question of the existence of the fact.

It is apparent that many functional diseases can be mistaken for organic diseases. We have already shown that bad suggestion can produce symptoms of organic disease— such as phantom tumors. The intense fear of hydrophobia may produce all the symptoms of this disease without the disease itself, and patients have even died from this fear and not from the physical ailment. If bad suggestion can so derange the body that a man feels as if he has a certain disease, is it any wonder that many people could easily mistake functional for organic trouble? Couldn't Mrs. Brown think that her phantom tumor was real, or couldn't the man with the familial bad heart also think that it was real?

There is enough of marvel and mystery in science itself, in seeing how the mind through the strange force of suggestion can affect the body in a functional way, to satisfy those who seek the mysterious and uncanny causes. If bad suggestion can incur untold bodily distress, is it any more strange that good suggestion can incur favorable changes in the body which to some appear like a miracle? The functional cures of disease justly reveal to us the great power which mind may exercise over the body.

V. THE MIND AND OTHER BODILY CONDITIONS

It has been discovered that victorious soldiers suffering from wounds recover more quickly than soldiers of defeated armies. This is not just a mere coincidence but something rationally possible, considering the effect of mind on the body. Physiological conditions await more than the physiological to tone them up.

An excellent illustration of the subtle relationship existing between mind and body is seen in the breathing curves taken of people when they were reading. Palmer[3] found that when a subject changes from reading quiet to exciting subject matter, the breathing curve indicates this change even when there is no apparent feeling change in the voice. Moreover, when a person is reading a newspaper with just ordinary and unexciting news, the breathing curve may indicate a change from a previous textbook reading topic. Palmer reports that an observer can tell by the breathing record when new reading was introduced, and it need not be an emotional change.

Dr. Coste de Lagrave, a French army physician, tells in his essay[4] that while campaigning in the winter season he could, by suggestion, forget his cold feet, but when he became mentally careless and sluggish he preferred to have cold feet. Many others join the physician in preferring

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[3] Palmer, M., Municipal University of Wichita, Speech Laboratory.

[4] Read before the first International Congress of Experimental Therapeutic Hypnotists, held in Paris. See the *Proceedings*, pp. 290–311.

"cold feet" rather than giving the mind a splendid tonic. We easily settle into an indifference. The doctor, by a mental rejuvenation, also accustomed himself to walk seven miles a day with ease instead of one mile with heavy fatigue, and made the change overnight.

Reverend Otis Gray, a chaplain in the World War, told the author the story of a soldier who had his left hip completely torn off by shrapnel, and yet he did not feel the injury in the thick of the fight. He dropped dead shortly after the battle. Mothers have not felt their own intense pain when their children were critically ill, or when there was an emergency or crisis, such as a fire in their homes.

These experiences demonstrate very vividly the working of suggestion and accompanying emotions. In the case of the fatally wounded soldier there was probably some kind of mental knowledge of the pain, but this was sidetracked in the back of the mind, and such ideas and emotions as endurance and bravery took its place and were unreservedly accepted. By occupying the main seat of attention and automatically going into a bodily effect, there was a very different result from that of pain. The conscious idea that affects the body the most is what is in the center of the mind. Mental poise can lower blood pressure, worry can raise it. Sadler[5] found with haemoglobin tests on a patient in a state of pessimism that the registration was 80, but after embracing a new psychic cult and securing a hopeful outlook, the registration was twenty points higher. Holding excellent states of mind will aid the elimination of poisons by stimulating circulation. A healthy mind through suggestion will aid respiration, and deep breathing will more quickly eliminate the carbon dioxide from the body and furnish more oxygen to burn up food into energy; it will also stimulate proper perspiration to aid the body in getting rid of waste products. Blanched skin with little circulation due to mental depression has very little sweat elimination. Depressed people are poor sweaters, for depression actually keeps poison penned up in the body. Animals in bad emotional states before being slaughtered may easily affect their own meat in an unwholesome manner. Excellent circulation due to an excellent state of mind also aids in the formation of antitoxins to combat the bodily bacterial invasion; good suggestion will aid the proper functioning of the various ductless glands, very essential to health. Bad suggestion unfavorably affects the trophic nerves that serve cellular growth, provide nutrition, and affect reproduction. When an unhealthful state of mind injures cell nutrition, the whole body is in a bad condition. Good suggestion will make a man stronger in pressing a dynamometer.

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[5] Sadler, W. S., *The Physiology of Faith and Fear* (1925), pp. 145ff.

Witness the remarkable change when we receive a bit of joyful news. The body seems to have lost all its weight, pain and cumbersomeness. We appear to be walking in the air. This is an interesting observation, for when the body is functioning at its best, we appear not to have a body. This is as it should be, for too much worry or concern over our physical condition has made our bodies too much with us. The body thus forces attention to itself and becomes a weary burden. Happy suggestion takes our mind off our body and it then becomes a very unobtrusive messenger to carry out the commands of the mind. It is no longer in the way. Man then lives by mind and not by flesh. The study of suggestion reveals to us that when poor thinking is planted in our minds, the body is a problem; when good thinking is followed, the body is no longer a problem, but an asset. Even with organic disease, the happy state of mind forbids the body from being very intrusive.

Sir William Osler, the great medical authority, said that the foundation of the medical profession is faith in doctor, his drugs, and his methods.

It is probable that healthful ideas and other good states of mind do not strictly produce new life in the body. Reserved life is probably released from bodily cells. Neurologists are unanimous in agreeing that we use only a portion of our nerve power; some say one third, some one fourth, some as low as one tenth. But their differences are a minor matter; they all agree that we are living only on a minor part of ourselves. Suggestion may call up our reserves.

William James[6] speaks of the power of the mind to tap reserve energies. In one place he speaks of will or volition being the agent that releases this force; in another place he speaks of the dynamic effect of live ideas—those accepted by unflinching faith or ideas of suggestion—"unlocking innumerable powers." Catch phrases, such as "Our country, right or wrong," accepted by suggestion, serve as levers to pry loose dormant energies. The buoyant mind enables the body to use its powers with a full and satisfying efficiency, whereas a depressed mind withdraws energy from use. Very much of it is thus made only potential instead of kinetic. When much energy is made potential, the individual is forced to "live on his nerve," and to go through the daily program with acts forced and strained. A bad state of mind makes the body bad by compelling the individual to work on very little energy, and this debilitated body reacts on the mind and makes it worse. Mental efficiency is to the mind *and* body what efficiency is to a factory.

Good suggestion or a good state of mind is a key that unlocks golden resources that for many people may lie buried for a whole lifetime. Thought can bring us physiological life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it impractical for a person to attempt to solve the mind-body relationship, or how one is related to the other?
2. Just how much might mind engender functional disease?
3. Why is emotion harmful to the body whether it does or does not accompany bad suggestion?

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[6] James, William, *Energies of Men* (1926), pp. 18 and 23.

4. Why cannot the mind alone create matter?

5. Why do people think that their functional trouble is not caused by the mind?

6. How much do you think health is dependent on the mind?

7. Do you think observation of people's conduct indicates the plausibility of the organismal theory?

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XV

MIND AND DIGESTION

Their minds had teeth and
they gnawed their stomachs.

I. INDIGESTION, THE PENALTY OF A TROUBLED MIND

Clendening, a medical authority, says that most stomach trouble is not of physical origin, that the most common organic stomach disease is ulcer, and only about 10 per cent of indigestion is due to this ailment. Another organic disease is cancer, but this he says, is comparatively rare—at least infrequent.

Physicians say, therefore, that the majority of cases of stomach troubles are mental in origin, or functional. Some say 75 per cent; others increase this percentage: Dubois[1] says it is as high as 90 per cent. It is difficult to estimate an exact percentage because an exact statistical survey has not been made, but there is no doubt that the majority of stomach disorders originates in the mind, as figures from every physician's office may show. Of course, in these cases there is stomach distress—and much of it—but the structural condition of the stomach sufferers is sound. There is nothing needed or lacking to furnish a healthy stomach. It just will not *work* right and is not a matter of organic depletion or inferiority. Physicians grow weary of saying, "There is nothing the matter with your stomach," only to hear, "But doctor, I suffer so; there must be something wrong." Oh yes, there is something wrong, but its origin lies in the head and not in the lower regions.

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[1] Dubois, Paul, *The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders* (1909), p. 258.

The human stomach is created in such a way that it runs itself best when least interrupted by the mind. It is controlled principally by the autonomic nervous system, which is designed to take good care of our vital organs without worry or fear on our part. But we will not let well enough alone. We mentally snoop into our stomachs and the consequence is that indigestion is the besetting psychological ailment of the race.

So much are people troubled with dyspepsia that it constitutes our chief wailing cry. And the wail *appears* justified, for "it never rains unless it pours." A deranged stomach entails a trail of ill effects that leaves the individual bedraggled and tired of life. A medieval monk once said that it was very difficult for a person afflicted with a bad stomach to be a Christian. Deranged digestion in itself is most distressing; but the worst effects follow. Poor digestion means poor assimilation; poor assimilation means poor nutrition; poor nutrition means debilitated nerve energy; debilitated nerve energy means little endurance; and little endurance means that the body is susceptible to disease, to hosts of petty irritations, worries, angers, disappointments, and a general despair. All on account of indigestion—especially the chronic, day-by-day type.

The psychologist urges mental hygiene for this functional trouble, but how can a person, it is said, maintain a healthy mind if the stomach is a miserable intruder. "Oh, if I only felt well, I could carry on with splendid optimism," is the anguished cry of many. But these individuals are putting the cart before the horse. They forget that their stomach trouble is a *result* and not a cause of the mental state.

Of course, when bad states of mind disturb digestion, indigestion in turn further disturbs the mind and augments the latter's power to molest digestion further. We have a vicious circle in all cases of functional stomach disorder.

An unhealthy mind produces an unhealthy stomach, but an unhealthy stomach keeps striking back at the mind and the mind again retaliates. It is a difficult task to break this circularity of response. Let *X* represent a bad state of mind and *Y* a bad state of the stomach, and we see the vicious circle represented in Figure 20.

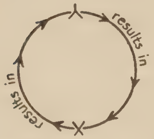

Figure 20.

Never is man more of a prisoner than when caught in this vicious circle. Yet he resorts to his tendency to project the blame upon his stomach when the trouble is elsewhere, little realizing that this little organ is an innocent victim of a troubled mind blind to its destructive consequences. Functional indigestion is merely a symptom of mental indigestion, and if a person is to extricate himself from the treadmill of bad-mind-and-bad-stomach, he must start at the source and prevent its occurrence. One of the greatest advancements in human living would be to salvage the sufferers of indigestion, who deprive the world of vigorous, enduring, optimistic workers by eking out a miserable existence with weak and helpless groans. Since the stomach is the most delicate organ influenced by one's state of mind, psychology is challenged to lead the multitude of dyspeptics back into normal health and solve one of the most baffling problems of civilization.

II. MIND, THE REGULATOR OF DIGESTION

A. Psychic and Chemical Juice

The most triking scientific experiment that shows the important effect of mind upon digestion was that performed by the eminent Russian physiologist Pavlov.[2] By means of a surgical operation, he created a "sample stomach" on dogs by separating it from the main stomach; it was about one eighth of the size of the stomach, and was made out of a portion of the stomach wall with its normal nerve and blood supply intact. This Pavlov pouch was internally sutured to the skin, but it was readily accessible from the outside, and its secretions could easily be collected and examined. On some of the dogs he made an opening in the esophagus in which he placed a tube through which the food after being eaten ran on the outside into a pan and not into the stomach. This he called "sham feeding." He found in one of his false feedings that while the dog lustily ate for six hours with not a particle of food entering the stomach, the glands secreted 700 cc. of gastric juice.

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[2] Pavlov, I. P., *The Work of the Digestive Glands* (London, 1902).

Bickel and Sasaki,[3] who also resorted to sham feeding, found that a dog after eating five minutes had 66.7 cc. of pure gastric juice and that this rate of secretion continued for twenty minutes. When a cat was brought into its presence, the dog flew into a rage. Then the cat was removed and sham feeding was again administered for five minutes, and there were only 9 cc. of gastric fluid for a period of twenty minutes, and it was of poor quality even though the dog was very hungry and ate greedily.

What is the interpretation of these interesting results? It is evident that food is not necessary in the stomach in order to start digestion. The only necessity is an appetite, but a *good* one. What is good appetite? One that is free from disturbing states. This is very significant, for it shows that the secretion of the digestive enzymes *is primarily dependent on the mind*, beneficially or injuriously, according to the degree of freedom of the mind from any anxiety. Pavlov had a pleasant eating situation and he was justified in concluding that a pleasant mind controls digestion, whereas the experiments of Bickel and Sasaki testify to the effect of the mind on digestion because of its disturbed condition. These two sets of investigations complete the evidence for both the positive and negative effect of mind on digestion. The secretion of gastric juice is, therefore, psychic in origin. Pavlov said that "appetite equals juice." The name "psychic juice," though it is regularly in the stomach, is consequently its right designation.

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[3] Bickel and Sasaki, *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift,* 31: 829 (1905).

But the mind has also a very important indirect function to perform in digestion. This initial juice is a matter of the mind, but so are the final stages of digestion. If this first psychic juice is sufficiently present in the stomach, the acid chyme in the duodenum sets enough free of what is called a "hormone," which stimulates the secretion from the pancreas and liver, and affects other organs necessary to complete digestion. But a bad state of mind *directly* interferes with this first digestion stage, and, therefore, *indirectly* prevents the last of it. In other words, if the first stages of digestion are good because of good appetite regulated by the mind, the rest of the digestive process is also good, if other conditions are right. If it is not good because of an unsettled mind, then the final stages are bad. A healthy mental state is, therefore, *directly* responsible for starting digestion and *indirectly* responsible for finishing it. Oechsler[4] has shown that if the secretion of gastric juice is stopped by a troubled mind, even the pancreatic juice may be stopped and the flow of the bile held up as a result of gastric achlorhydria.

The average human being tends to think that he can eat and digest food regardless of his state of mind, but experiments indicate a contrary idea. It was mentioned in the beginning of the chapter that the stomach belongs principally to the part of our make-up that runs itself in an automatic way. But hardly any part of our being is absolutely automatic. Mind makes itself felt even in the smallest bodily function. What is automatic is only relatively so. The latter part of digestion, being chemical in nature, is relatively automatic, but its efficiency, as we have seen, depends on the mind. However, the more one regulates his mind and eliminates cares and worries, the more the stomach functions in an automatic manner. The more the mind is upset the less the stomach works automatically. He who keeps a pleasant mind "never knows he has a stomach," for nature then works most efficiently, even though most unobtrusively. He who keeps an unpleasant mind "*always* knows he has a stomach," for nature is so disturbed that it works most inefficiently and not in the least unobtrusively.

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[4] Oechsler, *Internationelle Beiträge zur Pathologie und Therapie der Ernährung Störungen,* 5:1 (1914).

B. *Mind and Intestinal Action*

But states of mind also affect favorably or unfavorably secretory activity of the intestinal glands by stimulating circulation and preventing congestion or the opposite. Then the mind carries its states, as it were, over fine nerves of the sympathetic system and tremendously affects all intestinal activity. Many can testify that a sluggish and discouraged mind is often accompanied by a sluggish bowel —resulting in constipation that spells more misery to the individual with unhealthy mental functioning. Physicians regard the majority of constipation cases as mental. A reversal of viewpoint and attitude has given many an individual a freedom from sluggish intestines.

But the mind affects not only secretions of stomach and intestines, necessary for complete digestion, but also the contractions of the stomach and intestines necessary for digestion. Cannon[5] says that he watched the stomach of a male cat for an hour by means of the Röntgen rays and even though there was excitement in the animal only to the extent of a rapid frisking of the tail to and fro, there was not the slightest beginning of peristaltic activity. He also found that even a slight emotional disturbance has the same effect on the rabbit, dog, and guinea pig.

What is true of animals is also true of man. If a mild emotional state affects peristaltic activity of both stomach and intestines, a pronounced emotional disturbance would be bound to hinder these needed stomach and intestinal contractions. Cannon[6] also found that adrenal secretion, very common in emotions, causes the intestinal muscles to cease contracting.

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[5] Cannon, W. B., *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear, and Rage* (1923), p. 15.

The heavy load felt in the stomach after eating is generally probably a matter of a loaded mind, frightened with worry, pessimism, anger, and other harmful states, unless a person has overeaten or partaken of poor food. Lack of stomach contractions, which empty the stomach contents into the intestines, causes food to stagnate. And if food stagnates, there is a process known as "reverse action," or reverse peristalsis, which leads to vomiting.

If there is little or no nutrition, what strength is derived to meet the proper demands of life? We see that the mind is the controlling force of the *whole* process of digestion and he who does not keep his mind toned up may find his indigestion ruining his efficiency.

There is also the interesting principle that poor mental states have effects on the stomach that are stronger than positive influences. If a person is in a good frame of mind when eating, the effect is excellent and quick, but if in a disturbed state, the effect on digestion is very disturbing and very prolonged. The author has known cases where a mental disturbance lasting only two minutes resulted in a digestive disturbance that lasted for a day and a half. Muller[7] mentions a sensitive moody woman who would suffer a stomach disorder even for several days after a strong emotional state. What better testimony would be desired to indicate that mental disturbances are not according to nature's demands? Violation of nature is evident by the heavy punishment nature inflicts because of this violation.

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[7] Muller, *Deutsches Archiv für Klinische Medicin*, 89:434 (1907).

III. THE MIND AND SALIVARY GLANDS

But if appetite controls the stomach, as we saw in Pavlov's experiment, how does the mind control the appetite? In the lower brain region is situated the medulla oblongata, where the reflex centers for the salivary secretions are located; and here also is the center for the vagus fibers which control the vital organs of the viscera. In fact, our vital organs are supplied by two sets of nerves—one, the "peaceful" set, which during the smooth running of the body controls its normal functioning, and the other, the "emergency" set, which during an emotion accelerates the vital organs and might even hinder, as, for example, interfering with digestion. Connecting the medulla region with the cerebrum are nerve fibers over which the mind can transmit its messengers to the taste system.

When the individual before or during eating is in a very pleasant state of mind, the salivary reflex centers are set off through the nerve connections of the cerebrum and the medulla oblongata in a very copious manner and with a generous flow of saliva. Not only is there a generous flow, but it is also of very good quality. The person is now prepared for the first stage of digestion—namely, mastication of food with a proper admixture of saliva. This is very necessary to proper stomach digestion. Why? Because this masticated food comes in contact with the circular troughs surrounding the tastebuds of the tongue, and then the taste organs—enjoying themselves, as it were—send messengers to the stomach to pour out its gastric juice, even if no food should be dropped into the stomach. Optimal secretion for the most efficient digestion of food takes about five minutes.

What happens when there is a bad state of mind? The salivary reflex centers work poorly; there is an insufficient amount of saliva and it is of poor quality. When the poorly masticated food comes in contact with the tastebud messengers of the tongue, there is very little joy, as it were, passed on to the stomach, and its digestive juices are seriously lessened and are poor in quality, and contractions may be entirely stopped. Thus, while the salivary centers may work reflexively, they are controlled by the conscious mind. It is well to note that if the salivary glands were a simple matter of physics or chemistry, the internal pressure of the glands, being greater than the pressure in the surrounding blood vessels, would by the principle of osmosis pour their contents into the blood; but they are emptied into the ducts leading into the mouth. Something more is involved here than simple mechanics. The state of a person's mind is also involved, which, as previously mentioned, stimulates the salivary reflex centers. If the mind is in a healthy state, these centers are strongly stimulated. If not, then the effect is not very satisfactory. By a study of the salivary glands we have further evidence that initial stomach or appetite juice is in the last analysis a matter of mental attitude. Appetite truly waits on the mind, and digestion on appetite.

IV. THE SUBTLE PLAY OF THE MIND

It is difficult to realize how easily the mind may disorganize digestion. So delicate are the nerves leading to the stomach that it doesn't take a towering emotion to disturb digestion. As we have seen with animals, even a comparatively mildly ruffled state of mind will disturb it. A patient of the author's was quite puzzled by a continual stomach distress even when, as he declared, he kept it in a quiet, restful state while at the eating table. But he did not observe closely enough. He thought that he was not in an unpleasant state. He did not speak in an irritated manner while eating, did not argue, made no objections, and, of course, showed no anger.

This observation is quite interesting, for it throws light on a source of disturbance which is not suspected. Just because a person does not burst out in fits of emotion is no sign that he is not ruining his own digestion. He may think that he is in the proper frame of mind for eating, but he may still be in a negative state. Does he laugh at the table? Does he tell a humorous story? Does he comment pleasantly on certain conditions? He may still be "agin" things though there is no visible outburst of a bad emotion. While in this negative condition, he may be surly, grouchy, touchy, sad, sorrowful, discouraged—any one of which states may incur an injurious emotional flavor that disturbs nature's process of digestion. It takes very little of a bad state of mind to produce a bad state of the body, especially if one is not as strong as an ox.

The only remedy for such an individual is to extricate himself from his negative attitude; to come out of his "agin-things" spirit and be positive. Let him contribute in a definite way to the table conversation. Let him be *for* and not against the world, and only then will his mental state contribute to rather than injure the body. The stomach is a servant of the mind; by controlling the subtle and the apparently hidden negative states of the mind the eater will be fully and efficiently rewarded.

The subtle play of the mind upon the stomach is often seen in a patient with a gastric fistula due to an injured or closed esophagus; this is an artificial opening in the stomach, which forces the patient after eating food to eject it from his mouth into a tube passed through the gastric opening—it isn't strictly necessary for him even to take it into his mouth. The stomach and its contents are thus quite easily observed. In a case of a Canadian woodsman who had a gastric fistula it was seen that even a shift from one type of thinking to another even when no emotion was involved would alter the flow of the stomach fluids.

V. EVERY PERSON IS RIGHT ABOUT HIS OWN DIET

It is quite remarkable how an individual's own state of mind determines the edibility of food, and not the expert dietitian or physician.

A certain young lady of the author's acquaintance was, as she said, "poisoned against beef." She simply could not eat it under any circumstances unless the amount was so infinitesimally small that it could easily be covered up by another food. The most tender and choice bits were daintily and attractively prepared, "fit for the king's taste," yet her constant reaction was intense opposition. If she ventured to eat a little of it, she would soon feel a distress, and in many instances would actually vomit. The patient's mother thought the trouble was due to "just the way some folks are made" and let it go at that, little realizing that nature itself had nothing to do with it. If nature had had its way, the girl would have been constantly eating beef without very disagreeable interruptions.

The trouble was traced by a psychologist-physician to an experience of eating beef in conjunction with lobster which was not fresh; she overate, ate too quickly, and the food was most highly seasoned. She had a very violent sick spell, and from then on never digested a morsel of beef until the trick of suggestion was explained to her. She saw that she planted the idea in her own mind that she could not eat beef without its violently disagreeing with her. Her own mental state so disturbed her digestive tract that digestive disturbance was inevitable. She realized that she made her own ideas come true. She now eats beef with perfect relish and with no digestive trouble.

Dubois[8] mentions one patient who was so troubled by indigestion that she was given a final diet of only milk. But there was a suspicion of mere suggestion controlling her through the idea of imitating someone else in a stomach problem. The attendant reported to the physician that the girl asked secretly for bread, which was refused. Her trouble was vomiting; every time she drank even a glass of milk she consistently gave it back. She was approached by Dr. Dubois, who told her that he had hoped to give her a milk diet for six days and then on the seventh to put her on heavy food, but it looked as if she would have to have only milk continuously. She ceased vomiting that day and resumed a normal diet.

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[8] Dubois, Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

For years a friend was troubled with his stomach; he took all sorts of medicine. He was in great distress during the greater part of every day and he naturally thought that something was seriously wrong with him—outside of his own mind. A Lexington, Kentucky, physician examined him fluoroscopically, and said nothing was wrong. He told him that he was merely a "stump sucker"—a term applied to a horse which sucks in wind. The patient felt disgusted with such a diagnosis and went to a Chicago physician in whom he had implicit confidence. After being assured of a cure through good suggestion, he asked what he was to eat for lunch. To his happy surprise he was told to go and get a big tender steak smothered in onions and all the "trimmings." And it agreed perfectly. To have eaten such a lunch in his previous state of mind would have been impossible, but he soon learned that there might have been something to the idea that he sucked in his own wind; this produced a bloating and a belching, and then his previous idea that every bit of food disagreed with him suggestively produced an added distress. He created his own problem, but he did not know it for years.

Another friend got the idea that he could not eat cantaloupe. Of course he couldn't. His distress was evident. But he learned the trick of his bad autosuggestion, banished the wrong idea from his mind, ate a cantaloupe, and then put his attention entirely on his "chores." In a little while he brought a whole crate of cantaloupes and was so deluged with melons that his wife wished that his old harmful autosuggestion would return.

Autosuggestion is always right. It is no use to tell people that they are wrong when they decline certain good foods as bad for them, for they can always prove their own case. They rather pride themselves in being "particular" and "different." It sets them apart and attracts attention. How forcefully they establish their claim! They can sit right down before you and eat a food which most everybody else can eat, but immediately produce their expected and almost wanted distress. Presto! It works like magic! But they forget that they are only hoodwinking themselves.

People cannot play with troubled states of mind and then expect good digestion. Autosuggestion works here as inexorably as a law of physics. Many have experimented with themselves to see whether a bad state of mind will exact a digestive penalty. If a person sits down to a meal with the idea that a certain food will disagree, he will never find himself "disappointed."

Of course there are certain precautions which every person should take regarding food. A high-strung individual should not eat heavy roughage, and raw vegetables might be difficult for him to digest; food highly seasoned is also bad. These are but nature's wise precautions. Even a healthy state of mind must use discretion. But we are talking about the person who turns down good, palatable, nutritive food because his *mind* will not permit him to eat it.

VI. WRONG ASSOCIATIONS

But why does a person get the idea that certain foods are bad for him when at first he does not fear such food? It is on account of wrong association. It has its origin usually in eating certain foods at a time when the person is too tired, too worried, too angry, ill, or burdened with fear. Naturally he experiences a bad case of indigestion:

the stomach requires relaxation, not only in its own confines but also in the mind. After such a distressful experience he easily sets his mind against certain foods he ate at that time. It is a matter of the conditioned reflex. Certain foods merely being *associated* with *unpleasant* experiences come to produce unpleasant results. Yet if he ate the same food—barring organic trouble—with a calm and untroubled mind, he would find that it would be easily assimilated. We are too prone to generalize from one experience—and to violate logic right and left.

VII. SUGGESTION AND FOOD FADDISTS

A very interesting observation is that most of those groups organized to make a scientific study of food fall ironically into the grave error of interfering with their own health, the very thing they desire to build up. No one would decry the study of food in a scientific manner, but it should be done once and then forgotten about, and not be something pursued month by month as a kind of fetish. The author addressed such a group and discovered that the science of food is their undoing. Autosuggestion works badly. The members are *too concerned* with what to eat, and hence meddle with the unconscious functioning of the digestive tract. When they argue for two hours —pro and con—over whether they should eat toast with eggs, starch and protein, for breakfast, or whether mild and acid foods agree, is it any wonder that these simple and healthy combinations distress them? These scientific faddists are overdoing the matter and don't know how to employ scientific knowledge. They should be taught "hands off" in reference to their food furnace, and not to plant anxiety in their minds over everything they eat.

VIII. THE TABLE AND ITS MENTAL SETTING

It is not only the state of mind itself that makes or breaks digestion, but also that which surrounds it. Mental atmosphere of the best quality is also needed if the body is to assimilate food in the most beneficial manner. But for most people the mental setting is of little consequence. All that appears necessary to them is just to sit down and eat, provided the food is wholesome. The atmosphere around the table is a neglected problem and yet many worry over their "delicate" stomachs because of the neglect.

Note the general tendency to use the table as the clearinghouse for all family problems. The worries accumulated during the day or between meals are heaped on top of the food; complaints are saved until the call for meals; arguments are held in heated reserve until a member has his first mouthful. Then the "airing" begins and the tainted atmosphere is generously mixed with food contents. So this use of the table as a clearinghouse for trouble continues day by day to exact its toll in the form of poor digestion.

The old advice to keep troubles away from meals is not chiefly for politeness' sake or to insure a better social time, but to serve as a very necessary mental stimulant to digestion. The urge to spread humor at meals, to relate jokes and pleasant stories is not for just an idle pastime, but to aid nature in turning food into energy.

The best digestion is often among families with many children where complaints, worries, arguments, and so forth, at meals are discouraged. If worry or anxiety is expressed, it is frowned upon. In consequence there is a tendency toward cheerfulness and cordiality in such groups. Banter and good-natured joking run their limit. It appears that the small family is more often guilty of turning the table into a trouble gatherer. Man and wife, with no children or guests, often make eating a punishment instead of nature's needed benefit. Their "conversation" runs low and they fill up time with everything from bad moods to quarreling. More stomach trouble appears among small than among large family groups.

Naturally, an eating evil is the eat-and-run, short-order café counter. Here the solitary individual often goes and eats alone—and his solitude serves as a lever to pry up his chief worries. Worries seem to rush in like an avalanche and mix with the food to spoil it for hearty nutriment. Mental setting may count as much as table food, but there is no premium for the former at a quick-lunch counter. There is no statuary law against lonely eating at lunch counters, but there is decidedly a psychological law against it. Quick lunches may save time and money, but they are not good for digestion.

A psychological necessity is frequent dining out, and having guests. The too economical husband or wife may say that he or she could get the same thing cheaper at home than at a restaurant, but they miss the point. They may not get the equivalent, for their state of mind at home may lower the quality of their stomach to digest the food, and they need at this time the outside dining room to freshen up their digestion. It is economical to spend a few extra pennies in dining out now and then, for it brings the mind back into normal working order and helps to preserve the health. Many a man or woman who refuses to dine out would be surprised to know what continual dining at home costs him or her in distress and even in medical care because of mixing good food with a bad state of mind.

Frequent dinner guests are a psychological necessity to keep high a healthy mental tone. Here economy again prevents many people from having company for dinner, but we see that something more important than economy is involved. Much could be written today of the too prevalent modern method of entertaining—the herd method. With this method the hostess waits for a long period until she has a long list of those to whom she must return a dinner. Then she sends her invitations to corral them in some big favorite dining room downtown where the meal is interspersed or followed by a little vaudeville, or the guests are afterwards invited as a herd to visit the home and play cards. The crowd is so large and unwieldy that often the only respects the hostess can pay to each guest is to express the hope—indeed it is a hope—that he or she is having a good time. This herd method is followed for convenience, but it certainly is not real courtesy, and it also violates every psychological demand in entertaining guests. Each guest should be singled out and given an exaltation that belongs to graciousness and charm. Personal attention that raises the individual is needed. Then the mind of the guest is cleared of bad debris and is made to feel the thrill of living. But with the herd method of entertainment there is neither graciousness nor charm, and the guest is merely an impersonal entity being fed like an animal.

The old-fashioned but psychologically sound method of entertaining a few guests around one's own festive board and regarding each as an honored member is needed today if entertaining is not to degenerate into a mere parceling out of foods with little or no mental stimulation.

It is obvious that an attractive table is not only an artistic but a psychological necessity. The hurried housewife may set an unattractive table in the kitchen; it saves time but it may lessen the joy of eating. The husband and the wife may not mind the lack of table linen, good plateware, centerpiece, and so forth, but they do not—as many Americans also do not—yet know the value of an artistic setting. They do not realize that it may even aid digestion. Many a poverty-stricken individual in Europe exalts his beauty often at the expense of his food. This practice is little followed in America. We pride ourselves in being "so practical" that we forget that the artistic may also have a practical effect. Beautiful surroundings actually aid the appetite, whereas poor surroundings curtail and lower its quality. In order to cater to the welfare of our minds and bodies, it would be better to pay a dollar for just one sandwich in elegant surroundings than a dollar for a seven-course dinner in very poor surroundings. Art is not a frill but a necessity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How automatic is the stomach in its functioning?
2. What is meant by a negative effect being stronger than a positive effect?
3. How does bad suggestion or a bad idea disturb digestion?
4. Why is it neurologically possible for even subtle states of mind to affect digestion?
5. How common are unfortunate associations of food with mental disturbance, and a consequent shunning of such food?
6. Can you explain why an artistic setting aids digestion?
7. Why are small families liable to bring more trouble to the table than large families?

XVI

WORRY

The canker of care seems to eat the life away.
ANONYMOUS

I. THE DEFINITION OF WORRY

THE meaning of worry is clear: it is a species of fear lest a calamity should prevent the fulfillment of a desire, plan, or ambition. General fears are centered upon definite objects, and might continue for a long time, and even for life. A person fears a supposed ghost and generally always does; another fears a cyclone and always does. Worry, however, is a fear centered upon one *possible* frustration or another. It is impartial in its operation: an individual may have a foreboding about one thing today and another tomorrow. Since worry is a fear, we have an explanation for its seizure upon an individual. As a species of fear, it paralyzes the mind and makes one of the most baffling snarls in human existence.

It is rather surprising that the conscientious student gets very little help from textbooks on this strength-sapping bugaboo of worry. General platitudes on the subject abound and give a little help, but they fail when the actual knotty situation is at hand. We do not attempt to furnish in this chapter panaceas for worry, but we shall endeavor to provide a few good leads for its eradication. Over the serious impending frustration in life, man will probably always worry. To offer remedies for them would savor of the cheap optimism of a Pollyanna. When a mother bends over a very sick child, it is futile to tell her not to worry. When a businessman sees the probable collapse of the business which he has built up for many years, it is painful to hear advice not to worry. But over a host of trifles and many comparatively minor situations there is no need to rack the mind with the nightmare of worry.

An important factor about worry is that it is not really centered on outside circumstances. *Worry is mostly over ourselves.* We are afraid in regard to a situation. We feel that we have not the strength to withstand the calamity in case it should strike. The mind is a very easy and ready manufacturer of worry as we shall see.

In discussing the present topic, the worriers shall be divided into two classes: the disposition worriers and the trouble worriers, and remedies will be offered for each classification.

II. DISPOSITION WORRIERS

Perhaps the most common worrier is the unfortunate individual who worries when circumstances are as rosy as the rising sun. Worry arises because of the nature of their own minds; what is going wrong or will go wrong arises from the peculiarities of their own individualities. Such persons are generally unaware that they are their own victims, and in this ignorance go through a tremendous depression.

A. The Person with a Feeling of Inferiority

The first of the disposition worriers to be discussed are the individuals afflicted with an inferiority complex. They hold a very low estimate of their own minds. Because of this low rating they do not trust themselves to the uncertainty of the future. They much prefer to stay in the sure and safe present if they can find it. With this self-consciousness toward the future they inwardly tremble about every tomorrow.

The cause of this condition is personal mistreatment in childhood, generally resulting in introversion. It is not difficult to understand the feeling of inferiority of the child who is mistreated. Because of continual scoldings, continual naggings, continual whippings, and continual belittling, there is inevitably a loss of both enthusiasm and the feeling of self-importance. Such a child acts as if he has committed a crime and is in fear that he might be apprehended at any moment. He generally carries this feeling into adulthood. Necessarily, the pathetic plight of such a person could not stand very much foreboding. His mind is ready to be pushed over by a mere puff. Every step in the world is a strain and everything may spell an impending disaster, due to his mental impotence in meeting the risk of the future. No actual calamity need be threatening. We see that this kind of worrier is really worrying about himself and not about the future. If he had a strong confidence in his own mind, a hundred and one things that he impregnates with fear would not threaten. He colors everything with a risk even when there is no real risk, and of him it may be said that he has "had many troubles but they never happened."

With this feeling of inferiority there is also a constant suspicion of people and situations. Society is not thought to be friendly. This type cannot get along with people very well; he does not know what they will do next. He manufactures worry as a natural product of his mind.

The browbeaten person merely takes for granted his attitude and thinks that it is very natural for him to think the way he does. He does not question in the least the alleged truth of his attitude. The narrow measure of himself and the gloomy outlook upon life are thought to be inbred in his disposition, and no critical checkup is at first made of these worry-producing factors.

B. The Stubborn Individual

Another type of worrier in this class is the stubborn individual. This kind is more or less the very opposite of that just considered. These people are rather unafraid of the future, but they will brook no obstacles. A plan must be carried out in a certain way; an ambition must be realized exactly as they want it to be realized; a desire must be fulfilled in a precise manner. These stubborn individuals map out their course of actions and they do not want to deviate one iota from their blueprint. Yet they learn very early that other people have different plans. But instead of realizing that other people's ideas might be as good as their own, they adamantly refuse to accept deviations. There is thus a hard difference of opinion in committee meetings, on a church council, and on a board of directors. They show a tenaciously different viewpoint from that of a business partner, from that of lodge colleagues, from that of their wives, and even from that of their children. They turn this natural difference of opinion into a plotted opposition. They then fear that they will not have their own way. This fear turns itself into worry.

The stubborn person is one of our worst worriers, but we readily see that it is because of himself and not on account of real danger that threatens his plans. To concede a point now and then is not a weakness but a strength. There may be an occasional real threat of circumstances to thwart him, but as a rule his worry is caused by his own state of mind manufacturing its own hurdles; and then he blames other people for his difficulty in getting under way. The stubborn individual is tremendously under the power of his own suggestion. He thinks he is right, and he does not question one way or the other to see whether he is. His own determination is thought to make a thing right and truth does not make it so.

C. *The Innocent Type*

Another individual who worries because of disposition is the one who tenaciously desires certain things. Such people are not necessarily stubborn, but they are deluded by their own innocence. They have childlike minds and think that what they want they will get. They are pliable and cheerful creatures and would accept deviations from their plans, as the stubborn person would not, but they desire without carefully considering the possibility of their accomplishment. They are dreamers without practicality. They live in a fairyland where the touch of the magic wand is thought to be all that is necessary to fulfill one's desires. The young bride cannot understand why she can't immediately have her dream house with all of the modern conveniences. The young college girl does not realize that the course she has planned is not a proper one. The young worker does not realize why he does not advance any faster.

These impractical dreamers are constantly disillusioned and harassed by worry. They see their impractical plans threatened. They see the hard facts of life coming toward them with a smashing blow, and they fear disaster. They do not appear to question the wisdom of their schemes. They too are under the spell of their own suggestion and when some "cruel" friend or parent exposes their plans, they look up with a bewildering innocence. If their impractical desires were mild, they would not have so much difficulty, but they generally maintain their desires with such an ardent hope that a threatening disappointment is taken much to heart, and is surprisingly unexpected. However, the impractical dreamer goes quickly from dream to dream, and while he has his worries, they are rather short lived.

D. The Emotionally Unstable

Another type who worries from disposition is the emotionally unstable person. People belonging to this group are very high strung and are constantly under a high tension. Emotions for them are easily aroused and by their very nature indicate predicaments. Consequently, such people manufacture a threat against themselves and others.

Worry easily follows. They often go around in a very excited state warning people like a Paul Revere on horseback that a certain financial panic is around the corner; that a certain political candidate is dangerous; that Mary or John will not graduate from college; or that father will have to retire at forty-five because of illness when the cause is a mere trifle. This group is gnawed by little difficulties. They worry mostly over insignificant items, but, strange to say, they are often calmly subdued when an actual tragedy meets their lives.

E. The Hypochondriac

There is another class of people who also worry, not because there is actually anything serious threatening them, but only because of their own bodily condition.

The first type under this class is what the psychologist calls the "hypochondriac." He is examined by the physician and no organic trouble is discovered; so he is told that his difficulty is functional, brought on by a wrong state of mind. But it does no good to tell him. You cannot argue with him. You dare not tell him that he is mistaken. He assumes unwaveringly that there is something organically wrong and thinks that the explanation of the cause as a faulty mental attitude is mere sentimentality. It is best to treat such a patient as though his explanation were correct. His own delusion of his bodily condition is such a powerful autosuggestion that a counteridea will not easily move him.

These hypochondriacs have a floating fear of things outside of the body. They cannot put their fingers on any definite outside thing of which they are afraid. Their business may be going nicely; their children may be getting along successfully in school; they may have many friends; and they may have a gratifying amount of prestige in a community. They do not fear any one thing. Yet they seem to fear everything. They are always expecting calamity around the corner.

This floating fear is caused by an actual though not serious bodily condition. There is a certain bodily weakness, sometime an "all-gone feeling" in the thoracic area. In fact, the word "hypochondrium" means the region on either side of the abdomen under the costal cartilages and short ribs.

Persons feeling this bodily weakness are also timid, and this easily turns to worry. Such persons generate, according to Féré,[1] a disparaging attitude, and this is also an easy breeder of worry. Dubois[2] says that such people are subject to ennui and discouragement. But while these individuals have this body-breeding worry, it is caused by faulty suggestion which they do not realize is present.

This type of person best illustrates the meaning of the proverbial vicious circle which takes place when one worries. He already has a poor bodily condition, but he actually brings on a further bodily weakness because of a worried state of mind; once having set up this weakened bodily state, it in turn reacts upon his mind and increases the depressed state already there, until very soon he is caught in a round of futile energy dissipation. It is easy to see how such a person could easily think there was some organic trouble in his bodily system.

Another bodily condition that makes worry easy is heavy fatigue. The future is an uncertainty and a risk even for one in a rested state. But the very fatigued individual has a still greater fear. The tired man is more afraid of the future. More concern is expressed about a coming enterprise when very tired than when in the glow of strength. The crowded nerves thus add fatigue to the toll of bad consequences.

Another cause of worry is real or bodily ill health.

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[1] Féré, "Les troubles mentaux de la fatigue," *Medicine Moderne* (November, 1898).

[2] Dubois, P., *The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders* (1909).

Many diseases engender a constant worry; sinus trouble in certain stages, heart disease, and certain kinds of deafness, for example, are specifics in inducing worry.

Sickness that incurs a bodily weakness makes an individual feel timid about meeting the demands of life, and worry easily follows, although the disease of tuberculosis breeds in a strange fashion a buoyant hope about the future.

III. REMEDIES FOR WORRY OVER SELF

A. A New View of Life

The remedies for worry are evident. The patient must be re-educated, but circumstances need not necessarily be changed. The person suffering from an inferiority complex will probably be very much surprised to learn that the solution for his worries lies within himself rather than in conditions about him. He might be continually hoping for better conditions, but he is looking in the wrong direction. If he should revise his own mind, he will find that most of his worries will cease and the future will be bright with promise.

What he needs is to change bad suggestion into good, as we have discussed in the chapter on lack of confidence. He has very little idea that he may have a very different estimate of himself. He should discover that he formed this poor judgment of himself *only because of childhood training* and *not because his own mind is of little worth.* There is no justification for his perennial worry, but he has to be awakened out of his self-imposed lethargy.

Furthermore, this type of worrier should eliminate his maladjustment to people. The strangeness which he feels toward others should be turned into a friendly approach. Then he will not be constantly fearing what will happen next. Fear of people should be supplanted by a flight into instead of away from society.

Extrovert qualities should be imposed upon his introverted nature. He should train himself to give his mind and services freely to others. A cultivation of sociability with a genuine interest in other people's interests is his salvation. The introvert does not realize that society is the workshop for the building of a mind and that being caged within himself is a contradiction to the principle of mental development. An introvert worries because he runs away from life. Living is always a problem and a struggle. But a mental residence in the life of others will eliminate this struggle with its train of constant worry.

B. *Willingness to Yield*

The stubborn individual who brings worry upon himself because he fears opposition to his conceived inexorable plans needs to respect the minds of others. He is so narrow-minded that he wants all minds to fit into his little groove. He is socially a misfit. Other minds are conceived as mere clay to be molded into his inflated opinions. But this conception is merely bad suggestion. The stubborn man, as we have learned, just takes what he thinks is right as a matter of course. He hasn't arrived at a true deliberation of his views. They are merely an offspring of a dogged determination rather than of reasoning. Once his idea is made up it is accepted in blind faith.

Since other people necessarily have different views, the stubborn person should accept modifications of his ideas in order to fit them into a social medium. Why should any man punish himself by constantly fighting against those who have a perfect right to use their own minds? Stubbornness is mental disrespect. A little thought will convince the stubborn individual that he is his own victim, and a little consideration will show him the wisdom and justification in *setting his own mind for changes in his own plans.* The author is acquainted with a previously stubborn individual who has so schooled his mind to accept gladly the proposed modifications of his plans by others that he is now rather disappointed if they are not forthcoming. As might be expected, many of the worries of this once stubborn person have ceased. There is now a harmony between himself and his colleagues. He no longer raises his own hurdles to his own plans, and because he has struck them down, he now lives in peace with his fellow men.

C. Need of Practicality

There is no remedy for the childlike fostering upon others of impractical desires, with their attendant worry, except a knowledge of the world. The person subject to this delusion assumes that he can get whatever he wants, and this autosuggestion ends the matter for him. Only experience with the real facts of life will convince him that he must desire in a practical manner and then he will not have impending disappointment constantly dangling over his head. Since he incurs his own worries by impracticality, he can also eliminate them by mixing with his dreams the tang of real earth.

D. Emotional Control

The person who is too emotional and thereby worries over trifles needs, of course, emotional control and not a new world. Emotional control is perhaps the greatest problem in psychology. The best prescription is to keep away from situations that will arouse fear or worry, but this is prevention rather than control, and, moreover, it is impossible to prevent slightly disturbed circumstances from arising in business or in social life. However, these people may learn to react differently to such stimuli and thereby control their worry-producing minds.

E. Better Health

Little emphasis needs to be placed on the remedy of a strong body to withstand the onslaughts of worry. The hypochondriac has already a weak body, but it is made worse because of a weak mind. He brings on his own great worries, but he doesn't know it. The problem for such an individual is a program of a total re-education. As he improves his mental outlook, his health will improve, and his free-floating fear will float where it belongs—into thin air.

It is plain that the person who worries because of crowded nerves needs to eliminate the crowded hour. Perhaps he should eliminate many of his duties and activities, but, as we have already mentioned, the trouble is not so much in the number of activities he follows as in his *manner* of following them. He steams up his mind too much. There is a fluster and a bluster in meeting the manifold duties. All his energies must not be exposed and seething on the burning edge of activity. There should be power and repose in this day of high-pressure living. The worry due to heavy fatigue will obviously never be eradicated until we learn the futility of going beyond a certain moderate point of fatigue, as discussed in Chapter III.

IV. THE TROUBLE WORRIERS

In contrast to the great number of people who worry *over themselves* rather than over real impending trouble, there remains those who have the genuine type of worry—that is, a worry over an actual danger threatening one's health, a business scheme, a child's career, a pleasant social relation, and so forth. But when we eliminate worry because of an inferiority complex, introversion, stubbornness, the childlike and impractical dreamer, the emotionally unstable individual, and the thousands who fret over their bodily condition, worry over outside conditions does not loom up as such a gigantic problem.

However, the trouble worrier is not to be slighted. Worry is worry no matter how it arises. And both kinds exact a severe penalty. Worry is like a squirrel going around in a revolving cage. There is tremendous mental activity in worry, but it is lost and wasted. Worry is energy employed to tie up the mind instead of making it function.

V. REMEDIES FOR THE TROUBLE WORRIER

A. Free Activity

An aid for trouble worry, and also for disposition worry, which, because of the chronic state of the latter, is relatively of less worth, is free activity. It is an old saying that to cure worry one should *do* something—go out and hoe the garden, trim the hedge, clean up the basement, or *keep busy* with this or that.

This advice is good as far as it goes, but, as with many old sayings, it misses the kernel of the truth. The important principle behind this advice is found not in doing something, but in the *manner* of doing it. Going out and hoeing the garden when in a state of worry, or picking up a book and burying oneself in the story, might be very useless. Many an individual has hoed the garden and worry still sat on the throne.

It is not merely *doing something*, but a *particular kind* of activity that helps to relieve a person of worry. We have seen that the mind is tied up in a vicious circle when an individual is worried. It is in a deadlock of energy and the tension drives him to distraction. What is needed is a draining of that energy into a free and open channel. What does it is a spontaneous activity that uses the whole body. A complete abandonment of the entire body in movement will draw that vicious energy in worry away from the knotty center of the brain and spread it over the anatomical system.

What meets this requirement is not a slow, heavy, specialized activity, but a rough-and-ready movement of the entire body. Play in which a person lets himself go, such as basketball, football, tennis, and even golf if he throws his whole interest into it, is a good worry prescription.

Dancing and swimming are excellent. Hoeing the garden is also excellent if one hoes with an abandonment of the whole body. Attempting to read a book to kill worry is too concentrated. Energy is thus too much centered in one part of the body. Any concentrated activity merely aggravates worry.

Naturally a person who is in the throes of worry will not *feel* like abandoning his whole body to a free exercise, but once he has tried it and reaped its benefit, he may soon learn to do it without a great deal of hesitation.

B. The Need of Resignation

One of the most difficult needs to fulfill in modern life is that of resignation to stem the tide of worry. The day of simple faith when there was a humble submission to the inevitable in life is fast passing. There is at the present time so much of the spirit of independence that there is an almost conceited demand that circumstances shall not thwart one's endeavor. As man has risen in his dominion of the world, he has tended to defy the elements of the universe and to dare them to subdue him. During the devastating blight of a panic or a depression, there is often an inability to accept a failure in business because of this attitude. Suicides were plentiful among those involved in Wall Street speculation during the crash in October, 1929. Some of these people did not have the humbleness to bow before the inevitable. If man does not recognize the need of setting his mind for certain inevitable tragedies, then worry will stalk as a specter when irresistible forces make their inroads into human life. The Chinese philosopher recognized the unnecessary worry that arises from not accepting the inevitable when he said: "The legs of the stork are long, the legs of the duck are short; you cannot make the legs of the stork short, neither can you make the legs of the duck long. Why worry?"

C. The Substitution Method

Another characteristic of trouble worry must still be discussed. One of the important reasons for worry is that possessions or plans are considered so important that if the possession is taken away or the plan is thwarted or opposed, there is thought to be nothing to take their places. In respect to some things, of course, this is true. Nothing can take the place of a child if taken in death. Nothing can take the place of health if it is gone. No small business can be a substitute for a big business lost in a depression. But many of our plans and possessions are not so important that they cannot be replaced.

In worry the individual dotes upon a plan, for instance, as so exclusive and all-important that he would be mystified and broken if it were crushed. It is the all-or-none attitude. Happiness is put at stake on just one plan. There is never a thought of where to turn in case of disappointment.

However, if the individual should destroy this exclusive doting on one plan, then the evil of a disappointment would be lessened and, hence, worry would be lessened. Of course the disappointment would not be liked, but there would be a *preparedness* for eventualities—a readiness to adjust oneself to a setback. This preparedness would carry with it a reserve plan to be called out in case of an emergency. If worry puts a person into a quandary because there is nowhere to turn in case of the "worst coming to the worst," then this preparedness would enable him to *know* where to turn. Worry is essentially a lack of versatility or resourcefulness. *The cure for worry would, therefore, be a resort to resourcefulness.*

The substitution method provides this resourcefulness. There are two kinds: sublimation and the adoption of other normal plans. The first, as we know, means a refined substitution for a desire that is thwarted. A sublimated substitute means something different from the natural or normal means of satisfying a desire. Having children in a physical way is natural or normal; supervising the activities of children by adoption is the sublimated or refined substitute. It is a spiritual surrogate.

Planning for sublimated activity in case of disappointment would greatly *forestall* a bad future, and actual sublimated activity would lessen worry so much that it might no longer be a problem. Thus, in case of disappointment the individual has another direction in which to turn. He is not committed to just *one way*. All the eggs are not in one basket.

(*1*) *Sublimation.* One person ardently hopes to travel. Another wants to become an artist. A boy craves to be an athlete. Another wants to go to college. Another has a mania for a leadership of men. A woman desires motherhood. But a fear arises that these fond hopes will not be realized. Trouble is thought to be impending. It looks as if disaster will strike and cut into these basic urges of the human being. A worry thus sets in and there is a continual regret that the dream will not be realized.

The individual with the fond hope for travel does not worry much if he plans for a sublimation when he sees that his hopes might be dashed to pieces. He may eventually organize an explorer's club, a trophy room representative of foreign countries, a curio collection, explore through books, or plan some other mental substitute to satisfy his craving for travel in case of disappointment in actual travel. The individual with a love of art need not fold his hands in abject worry when he sees that lack of means might not enable him to educate himself in the skill of an artist. He could plan to sublimate in case of actual disappointment in art training by forming study clubs of art, becoming an art critic, or having a splendid library of art books. With an insight into sublimation a man who sees that his wishes for a college education might not be realized could eventually plan to give vent to his ambition by becoming an expert in some particular line of thought. The one who sees himself losing in personal leadership of men could attempt to lead in an impersonal way by becoming an authority in a certain field.

The author knows of personal instances of every one of these kinds of sublimation. These individuals planned to adopt sublimation in case they were disappointed in their hopes. In some instances the disappointment did not come, but they were at least prepared for it. When the actual thwarting came, they resorted to the planned sublimation; thus suppression of fond wants, which kills enthusiasm because of a whipped mental state, was avoided. One of the greatest demands of the human mind is to keep a good urge going.

William James says that the greatest remedy for worry is religion: "The sovereign cure for worry is religious faith." The greatest sublimation is, therefore, religion. The world's greatest blasted hopes and dreams are drained off through its channels. All that people want or are deprived of through tribulation are spiritually provided in religion. Knowing that religion is the refuge deprives worry of its sting. Those who worry least are the most religious, for their faith enables them to believe that "God in some way will make everything come out all right." Even when stark, terrific tragedy appears ready to stalk before them, worry is often allayed by saying, "God's will be done." Religion completes the picture left damaged by circumstances. But in this day of flaunting independence and lack of simple faith, many are failing to provide themselves with the religious safeguard. It would pay many to return to this simple innocent faith-state of mind to quiet their worry.

In religious sublimation we see especially the power of excellent suggestion. The person of real religious faith never questions for a single instance the ability and mercy of God to meet his wants, sometime, somewhere. He cannot possibly question it or it would not be faith.

(2) *Readiness to adopt other direct methods.* The second kind of substitution for worry is where a person is prepared beforehand with other kinds of direct methods in

case of an emergency. The author is acquainted with a businessman who worries very little. He puts a plan into operation for an increase of business and spends much money on its execution. But circumstances threaten him. He keeps his equilibrium, however, and when asked why he is so cheerful in the face of a threatened collapse of his plan, and a subsequent loss of money, he replies, "From the very beginning I had several plans up my sleeve. If one failed, I was ready to throw another into the breach." Another acquaintance, given little to worry, always has many proposals to place before his board of directors. Only one of them is at first presented. If it is threatened with danger, he is *ready instantly* to make another proposal. A mother has several plans for her boy filed away in her mind in case one or another should fail. If a plan does not appear to be going well, she brings out another, very quickly and easily. A field general apparently stakes all on a certain battle. It finally goes against him, to the consternation of his staff; but his unworried countenance reveals that he has been ready to adopt another plan of campaign in case the first plan failed.

Such preparation is made as a matter of course. Worry by its very nature is blind to alternatives, or it is not worry. It indicates that the mind is in a jam and the future is closed. *Worry cannot see possibilities.* It cannot see ahead. It has no future. Providing for a future is one of our best cures for this devastating emotion. When a person follows the principle of substitution, he *prepares* for emergencies. Then he makes it psychologically difficult to worry. A mind that is open and set for alternatives is just the opposite of the mind that is closed to everything except worry. Worry and the mind set for alternatives are incompatible and contradictory. Worry means a closed mind, whereas the man who prepares himself for contingencies has the open mind.

The principle of substitution sifts down to a preparation for the future. Worry sets in because the future stumps one. The future threatens the *only* preparation that one has. Worry is therefore unpreparedness. The more of a mapped future a man has, the less he worries; the less of a planned future he has, the more he worries.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How often do people realize that much of worry is due to disposition and not to impending trouble?
2. Name some definite things an introvert may do to become extroverted.
3. Why does the human being worry while a lower animal does not?
4. Name some specific causes in modern life for people becoming rebellious over threatened trouble.
5. Why is resignation a cure for worry?
6. Do people generally adopt the principle of total free-body activity as an antidote to worry?
7. Why have people not resorted more to sublimation in order to forestall or lessen worry?
8. Do you think every child could be taught a preparedness for emergencies and thereby lessen the ravages of worry?

XVII

SUGGESTION AND IRRITABILITY

Impatience never commanded success.
CHAPIN

I. THE PREVALENCE AND COST OF IRRITABILITY

In a psychology class where the members were asked to name their most troublesome trait, irritability was given by 60 per cent of the group. This is probably indicative of people in general. Very few are exempt from irritability, either as a general habit or as an occasional display. It may be called the American nerve disease because of its marked prevalence in this country.

A distinction must be made between irritability and irritation: the former connotes a state of readiness; while the latter is the result of a touching off of irritability. Irritation is simply a disturbed feeling of annoyance caused by the intrusion of trifles. A person may stand like a rock of Gibraltar in the face of grief or a calamity, and yet shake with impatience when an insignificant event interferes. A woman may display wonderful poise in the death of a loved one, and yet be irritated when the maid stubs her toe in going across the room. A housewife may hear with equanimity of the loss of her house and precious possessions by fire, and yet be very much disturbed if a bridge partner misplays her hand. A man may conduct his business with the quietness of a genius, and yet be very much annoyed if the soup on the dinner table is cold. A strong, virile male may lift us out of a depression with a holy patience, and yet be upset if someone should accidentally bump into him in a doorway. These cases show that irritation is a superficial frittering away of energy. It is an effervescence of strength which is costly and very unnecessary.

II. CAUSE OF IRRITATION

When we say that irritation is brought on by the intrusion of trifles, we do not mean that they are the cause of it. They are but the occasions or conditions setting it off. The cause lies within an individual's organism. What this cause is may be a little difficult to say. But the trouble really lies in the nervous system. It is probably due to an interference of nerve currents—one opposing the other and creating a tension. This in turn explodes, and we have the symptoms of irritation.

If an individual goes along quietly and without any disturbance, irritation is not displayed. But presently something happens that he does not want to happen. A disturbing reaction is called out. Nerve force is directed to the disturbing element. But he is not prepared for this extra display. A businessman is busy with a conference and does not want the secretary to announce a caller. To do so may occasion an irritation. A mother plans on keeping her house very clean when the children dirty the carpet or break a dish. She is not prepared for this intrusion, and irritation may result. A man plans to go through a doorway undisturbed and when bumped into by another person, he is not prepared for it, and the intruder may soon be made aware of his outburst. *Nerve current in irritation is wrenched out of a planned circuit*, and this struggle of nerve forces creates a strain and consequently the irritable outburst.

The reason a greater disturbing force does not cause irritation is probably that it is so strong that it overcomes a planned direction of a nerve current and sets it at naught. Defeat is meted out and hence there is no opposition of nerve currents. A person is *entirely* set back by a major interference. When death strikes, the plans for the one taken in death are made void. When a business is lost, the plans for the business are entirely ruined. Here there is no real nerve interference. It is nerve monopoly. But as we shall show, irritation means cutting into a definite tendency of the nervous system. In the last analysis, irritation is, therefore, caused within a man and not without.

III. IRRITATION, A COMPENSATION

But while irritation is caused by nerve tension, it also has a function to perform. It aims to be paid back for this nerve tension created by interference. It is not something kept within the organism, but is directed with full force to the occasion for the intrusion. In other words, it is a compensation for the loss to one's pride in being interfered with. It sends its shafts to the person or thing occasioning the interference in order to depreciate it. It is a matter of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

When a person is shoved about in a crowd, this interference naturally disturbs his sense of importance. His plans have not been respected. He was not allowed to go his way unobstructed as he desired. This humiliation calls for a settlement, and irritation is displayed at the offending intruder to cheapen him in turn. Irritation is, consequently, an antisocial emotion, and is thus of a low order of morality. It is disrespect for another because of a disrespect thought to be displayed toward oneself. It is a fighting weapon to belittle the offender.

To fritter away energy in this fashion several or many times during the day accentuates frayed nerves. It adds fuel to the fire until we are caught in a continual round of wasting energy on nothing but mere trifles. Pursued day by day, week by week, and month by month, irritation will obviously leave a person with little energy for the further work of the day. He will rapidly be fatigued. Mistakes will occur thick and fast. Enemies will be easily and frequently made. Living will be a hard job and the final result may be a loss of position, an enforced vacation, or a bed in a sanitarium. It may exhaust a person more than the sum total of his illnesses. It is a profligate form of indulgence, and the victim of irritation is thus treating himself worse than he would an impersonal machine in a factory. An engineer would not be worthy of his hire if he allowed a machine to rattle and waste its energy.

And yet this American nerve disease is given little consideration. It is seldom treated in books of psychology. Few magazines present articles on the theme and people merely take it for granted and do virtually nothing about it. It is permitted to eat away the mental life like a parasite, and its spread has become so wide that this leech has become gigantic in size.

IV. OCCASIONS FOR IRRITATION

Three general occasions for this nerve affliction will be presented; each will be followed by a discussion of remedies. The first occasion to be treated is that of bodily condition; the second, wrong association; and third, a collision against a mental set.

A. Bodily Condition

1. Illness. It is evident that poor health accounts for many, and perhaps most, cases of irritation. Those who are ill are so unstable in nerves that trifles easily bring on annoyance. The sickroom is kept quiet and peaceful to allow the patient every chance of fighting disease. But many people are walking the streets in a state of poor health. The body has then a difficult time to take care of itself. It is constantly on edge and any extra thing will very readily upset it. A low-toned body has a very difficult chance to strengthen itself in the rush and haste of the office and shop. It is not given an opportunity to build up its energy. Trifles sap it, and every morning there is no more energy stored up than there was the day before. Poor health invites irritation, and it is almost hopeless to try to overcome it if the patient continues his round of duties in the whirling excitement of modern life. There is no problem in explaining irritation if the individual is in a rundown condition.

2. *Fatigue.* It is also obvious that irritation easily follows upon fatigue. The latter is really a case of temporary illness, for the poisons in the body force it into a weak state which makes annoyance a common thing. If a person is not physically tired, mental fatigue will also easily occasion irritation. Indeed the nerves are more frayed in mental than in physical fatigue, and are more ready to snap at the intrusion of trifles. It is not unusual for a man to be poised and patient during seven hours of work, and then bite out in irritation in the eighth hour. No such person needs to go to a psychologist for an explanation of his irritation, and yet many persons who like to find something wrong with their minds bring to him such needless complaints. When irritation follows fatigue, it adds greatly to fatigue and makes recovery rather slow. Fatigue if not aggravated by irritation is soon dispersed, but when so aggravated it is as difficult to eradicate as if the person had overworked.

3. *The slow nerve current.* The reader may doubt whether there is any connection between a slow nerve current and irritation, but there is a very close relationship.

A person who is phlegmatic in disposition necessarily has a slow conductivity of nerve impulse. He can't work at a fast rate. It takes him quite a while to make a bodily adjustment to a task. The reactions of nerve and muscle are retarded. All individuals have a certain natural rate of nerve current conduction, and to this they should adapt their various activities.

But in this day and generation where speed is a mania, a phlegmatic individual is forced or forces himself to think and act beyond his natural speed. He tries to do ten things in one hour when he should do but three. He tries to rush his work for the day when he should perhaps take three days for it. He admires the quick thinker and doer, and tries to emulate him. What another can do he thinks he can do. As a consequence, he pushes his own nerves. He crowds them, and very soon the point is reached when he explodes. He can't meet a stimulus fast enough. We know that after a single wave of excitation is set up in a nerve fiber, there is a very brief period in which it will not respond to another stimulus. It is not ready for it. This is called "refractory phase." The time it takes for a nerve to be stimulated is called "the latent period." Now the phlegmatic individual has a longer latent period, as it were, for his nerves to get started than a high-strung individual. Yet he tries to perform as though he were as fast. Then he crowds his stimulations and does not observe the refractory phase of his nerves. We see the inevitable result. With new tasks being thrust upon him with sometimes a bewildering speed, he can't react to them fast enough, and yet he struggles to do so.

Irritation is bound to result. In fact, we shall see in our discussion of this subject that it is always occasioned by some kind of unreadiness of body or mind or both. In the present case the mind is willing, but the body is not. It is almost pathetic to watch phlegmatic individuals crowd their nerves and then punish themselves and others with irritation.

B. Wrong Associations

In our previous discussion we have seen how the body itself is unprepared in at least three ways to resist the intrusion of trifles: by poor health, fatigue, and slow disposition. In this section we deal with an unreadiness of mind due to faulty and mostly unconscious associations set up in the past. Certain dislikes have been engendered toward certain objects, situations, or persons, and when they appear in our personal environment, we easily show an annoyance.

Many wealthy people are brought up to regard the person of no means as if he had little mind and was worth little.

If the former finds that such a person has been "thrust" into his company on a fishing or camping trip, he may show annoyance at everything the "poor individual" does. Everything associated with him is disagreeable, and he resents being in his company. A woman of the aristocratic class snubs a woman of an "inferior" class should she be forced to associate with her in a social function or even in welfare work. The closer the association the more pronounced is the irritation.

A child who naturally dislikes spinach, and who learns to dislike it even more because it is the butt of jokes, will easily show irritation when it is placed on the table. An individual may show annoyance when eggs are set before him because he had an unfortunate experience at one time in the past when a particular egg was none too fresh. A housewife may resent eating carrots because a neighbor whom she dislikes dotes upon this delicacy. A person may be irritated by a dress of a certain color simply because it is associated in the dim past with a rumpus resulting in a severe thrashing. Another person is annoyed at men's colored shirts because the first man he saw wearing one was his bitter enemy. Some are even annoyed at the English type of overcoat because it is associated with royalty. The author could name some persons who are irritated if certain types of furniture are in their household simply because they associate the furniture with their poverty struggle from which they desire to flee in memory, as well as in fact. The author would show a marked irritation if he were asked to try on a certain length of trousers because they are associated with the early period of adolescence in which he had to wear "hand-me-downs."

Numerous illustrations could be furnished in which people showed a very decided unreadiness to associate with certain other people, objects, or conditions only because unpleasant feelings had been tied to them, and often so far in the past that the situations linking them together are entirely forgotten. The association was naturally a chance one. It could have been very different. But even though they are chance associations, they as a rule bother us through a whole life, bringing with them a penalty for the past.

C. The Opposition to a Mental Set

The last general occasion for irritation is that of a priming of the mind in a certain direction, so that trifling deviations are unwelcomely received. A child has been trained to have a certain toy table in a certain place, to eat certain kinds of foods, to wear a certain kind of clothes, and to learn his reading in a certain way. If a determined child, then every little infraction of these "plans" may cause irritation. He may even stamp his feet and show signs of a tantrum.

Such signs of irritation are not a sign of bad conduct, as many parents believe, but are merely psychological in the sense of a rebellion against changing a trend rooted in the nervous system. This irritation may be followed by stubbornness because children of this type have nerve currents centered or focused toward an act with such strength that they are difficult to deflect.

Such a child is acting merely because he was trained in a certain manner. Given strong nerve currents and trained definitely to use certain kinds of food dishes, or to take a bath a certain way, he would naturally not easily change, and unless the parents know how to handle the child, irritation results. He is simply following previous instructions and hence there can be no moral blame. Other children with a less vigorous nerve current do not easily become irritated. However, the easily annoyed child has strong impulses, which are very excellent psychological equipment for a driving force in meeting ambition and winning success.

It may be said that the easily disturbed child is acting deliberately in this manner. But he does not deliberately want things in a certain way. Why he wants to do things in a certain manner is unknown to him. He naturally would not know why, for the driving impulses were crystallized in nervous and mental sets that later act unconsciously. A delusion about free will can be seen in this situation. We think we have willed an act "out of the blue" because we think that we have worked out the *reason* for it, while it is probably caused only by an unconscious urge made by past training. We *think* we *deliberately* do certain things when it is blind impulse that drives us. So the child is not really planning in a deliberate way to show irritation. It looks as though it is just "orneriness," but it is done before he realizes it, and only as a result of being trained to *expect* things to be done in *just certain* ways.

The mental set of the adult against interruptions is very different from that of the child. With the latter, aversion to interruption is pretty much of an unconscious trend, a matter of an earlier training which carries on as started. In the former case it is pretty much of a conscious matter. The adult can easily classify the irritating objects and incidents in his personal surroundings. One day there may be a certain classification; on the following day it may be different, even excluding some things in the previous classification which were considered annoying. In this rather strange procedure, a man sets himself for certain stimuli as pleasant and useful, and others as unpleasant, annoying, and unnecessary. It may even be said that he plans to be annoyed if certain stimuli should arise. The nervous system is already keyed up against certain things which, if they take place, will be disturbing.

A certain executive known to the author shifts his mental set day by day for various factors to be considered annoying. Monday is set aside for conferences. His mind is set in that direction. He expects and even wants to see people come into his office. There is no annoyance from them; meeting them is a pleasant and desirable service. Tuesday, however, is very different. He plans to clean up his correspondence and to take care of reports. He has time to see certain people, but he just sets his mind against them. When a person enters his office, there is evidence of irritation, as though all people were a nuisance. This is his reaction for the whole day, and by being dragged to hold conferences against his mental set, he finds himself very weary when he closes his office. This constant tension every Tuesday makes a tremendous inroad into his energy. So it goes on constantly, week in and week out, this shifting of mental set which one day looks upon people in a kindly spirit, while on another as distinctly annoying. There is an apparent inconsistency in this kind of behavior, yet considering the content and direction of each mental set, it is logical to be for and against the same object at different times. We might hastily judge the executive on Tuesday as being ill-natured and unadapted to his job, but we cannot say that he has a bad disposition, and is unable to deal with people. It is a matter of mental set which he apparently does not understand. He merely wonders why he gets so tired.

A young father is asked by his wife to take care of the children for a couple of hours in the evening. One day he likes the nursing task, and another he decidedly does not. But here again it is a matter of mental set. He is lovingly devoted to his children. It is not because he has not the time, nor is it inconvenient. It is simply because he has his mind set on doing something *else* which at the time does not need to be done. Children are not included in this kind of mental set, and taking care of them leads to an irritation. But let him switch his mental set and mentally let go of these tasks that do not need to be done at that time, and he can romp and play with the youngsters in a spirit of splendid enjoyment and relaxation.

A prominent businessman resents for months at a time being pressed into social service—serving on the community chest board, on church councils, on committees to promote receptions, and so forth. Every appeal that is made to him is turned down with irritation. But during the next few months we find him plunging very wholeheartedly into community activities—carrying them out with utter abandonment, efficiency, and enjoyment, and winning the deserved praise of his colleagues. We can understand the attitude of such a man if we understand the meaning of a mental set. For no special and sound reason this executive decides against participation in community affairs for a while. His only excuse is that it might involve him too much. At another time he simply decides to switch the mental set and what was previously the thing he opposed now is the thing he wants. He then even says that community coöperation is a splendid aid to business, and every businessman should show a community spirit.

Why people are cold and warm toward the same object is a little difficult to explain. The executive first mentioned has the people's problems at heart, the young father loves his children, and the businessman believes in community activity. With them the difficulty is not a matter of talent or interest. It may be because these individuals tend to be narrow-minded in the psychological sense of the term. Perhaps they do not want very much on their minds at once; or they are not pliable and do not easily switch from one task to another in their schedules. It may be ponderability of nerve current as discussed in the previous section.

We also become set in our feelings and emotions, and dislike to change. This is an explanation of why we like our emotions. Being set in them is apparently more comfortable than a change. We resent giving up an anger. It feels rather thrilling. We resent giving up a grudge or a revenge. We could even give up our worries sooner than we do because we are set to continue this emotion. Samuel Johnson says: "When grief is fresh, any attempt to divert it only irritates." There are people who want to weep, and resent it when others plead with them to stop. They love their tears.

V. REMEDIES FOR IRRITATION

A. Bodily Condition

In presenting three principal occasions for irritation—a poor bodily condition, wrong association, and opposition to a mental set—we see that in all three the most important factor is unreadiness for interruptions. The person in poor health is not prepared for strains upon the body. A person weighed down with fatigue does not want objects intruding upon him. The phlegmatic individual does not want to be pushed in nerves, and is unprepared for it. The individual with wrong associations is not prepared to accept certain conditions in a pleasant spirit. These people are prepared in certain directions, but not in others. They are *ill adapted to deviations of a trifling character.* Why they are disturbed by a trifling deviation and often stand their ground when there is a momentous change in their lives is, as we have mentioned, difficult to explain. We wonder why a cow grows restless with a fly on its back, and quietly stands in a raging storm.

If a man is irritated because of poor health there are two remedies: either to go away for a cure and escape the bombardment of interrupting stimuli, or to cut down on his activity to such a point that there will be plenty of time for rest and composure. A trip for health may be out of the question because of lack of means. Often the only remedy left is retiring for a while on a low minimum of activities to give the body a chance to store up a reserve of energy. It is a very difficult task to attempt to build up strength by continuing full activities with many irritating jolts to the nervous system. Some individuals with a powerful mental control, and with the aid of psychological principles, can tone up their minds right in the midst of disturbing forces. But to attempt to gain poise in the thick of battle with a poorly equipped body is a discouraging task for most people. Reserve strength is generally needed to stave off interrupting stimuli. The ailing person is always on the ragged edge and there is nothing to fight against extra and unprepared-for intrusions. The body should be, therefore, withdrawn from too much tension and nursed in more or less solitude.

The whole question of fatigue and irritation is still pretty much an open one. How to push off fatigue is still one of the most important questions of psychology. Both the bodily and mental factors must be taken into consideration. The physical condition must be put into better form by a wiser method of eating and muscular activity. Most people do not eat properly. And by the time-and-motion studies we know that even the very simple job that appears to be done very easily and with the greatest skill often lacks the best muscle coördination. We shall be compelled in the interest of efficiency to revise our jobs and save unnecessary expenditure of energy. The proper mental outlook to lessen fatigue is also a challenge. Fatigue is undoubtedly due more to worry, inward tensions, and warping desires than to actual work. Each individual has his own special problem in providing for himself the best mental hygiene to stave off fatigue due to a faulty mental outlook. We are still far from this coveted goal. A better use of both mind and body will certainly lessen irritation due to heavy fatigue.

The person with a slow nerve current who crowds his nerves has, however, a clear and simple remedy. He should speed his actions according to his own natural tempo. Futile imitation of the rushed speed of others should be stopped. Regardless of the other person's tempo, each man should follow his own pace even though he might be much slower than the man beside him. Of course, almost every individual can increase his speed of production. Few go their limit, but when the natural capacity has reached its limit, the latent and refractory phases, as it were, become so evident and so stubborn that further speed is bound to result in irritation, and in an eventual poor health.

Some people can easily do many things during the day while others can do comparatively few, without pushing their nerves. *Let a man find his easy and frictionless pace and not attempt to go beyond it.* Then irritation because of pushed nerves will not be a problem.

B. Wrong Associations

People with dislikes associated with certain persons, objects, and situations hold such associations mostly as a matter of suggestion. They do not investigate them. They merely take them for granted. They do not rivet the critical eye upon them. They allow them to stand just as they are without any consideration, one way or the other. They think of them as just one of those unexplained things in human nature.

Most dislikes are prejudices induced in the past by training, but the source is often forgotten. No dislike, even one that is apparently justified, is inherited. All likes and dislikes are created after birth. Consequently anyone might run back associations to their source, and then it will be discovered that most of them were mere coincidences and unfair to oneself, and to the object of attack.

Is there any justified reason why an "aristocrat" should snub a respectably poor man? But he refuses to face his prejudice and be convinced of its illogical and unfair nature. He prefers to hold to it without reason, and will not argue about it.

Is there any justified reason for an "aristocratic" woman feeling irritated when compelled to do social work with a woman who is not in her class? Her aloofness is just a matter of suggestion. She just accepts the idea and does not dare to question it.

Is there any justified reason why a person should show irritation when eggs are placed on the table simply because he had a very unpleasant experience long ago with an egg suffering from old age? He does not ask any questions about it, and refuses to listen to anybody concerning the nutritive value of eggs. He buries consideration and prefers to be misled by a faulty idea.

No one can defend himself in disliking a certain color, certain furniture, an English-cut overcoat, or a man with red hair. There is nothing in these items *themselves* to occasion a dislike. There are natural antipathies, such as those directed against certain pungent odors—as, for example, ammonia—tastes, and few other sensations, but we cannot say that we *dislike* such things. There is nothing personal about this antipathy.

These dislikes that occasion much irritation might easily have been prevented. The rich child could have been taught even to like a poverty-stricken youngster. The aristocratic woman could have been taught to dispense with class distinction. The disliked color, green, red, or orange, could just as well have been associated with a pleasant experience, and preferred to all others. Certain types of furniture are not intrinsically bad. If one type could have been associated with happy and thrilling childhood, it would be guarded as though it were a precious sentiment. If even an ugly bureau of drawers had been associated with his first express wagon, a man would feast his eyes upon it as a work of art. But associations can be changed now if anyone desires. There is no real need of continuing irritations due to association. We can at least follow a new suggestion and hold to the idea *unquestionably* that associations are chance matters, and most of them are unjustified and ridiculous.

C. Opposition to a Mental Set

1. The irritated child. The remedy for the irritation shown by a child is not punishment, but enlightenment. Most irritated children are very consistent in their conduct. They act as they have been trained. If a boy shows an irritation because he cannot tie his shoestring well and in good time, this is not strange. He was actually trained to tie a shoestring in a certain way and to do so in a reasonable time. He was set toward doing it in a certain manner. He wants it done in this way more than another child because he is constitutionally given to stronger nerve tendencies. His nerve current becomes directed with far greater force toward a certain end, and deflection and change are a problem. Parents are responsible, as we shall show, for many of their children's irritations.

The remedy is twofold. First, we should not make deflections for a strong-minded child from the trained path too abrupt and sudden. They should be made as easy and gradual as possible. I as a parent should see that he ties his shoestrings without *too* much trouble, that he dresses without tearing his nerves out by the root, or that he hangs his clothes where they belong without having to wade through obstacles to get there. A child with an easygoing nature can easily adapt himself to change or deflections from the trained path. It does not make much difference to him whether he ties his shoestrings in five or fifteen seconds. But it certainly does to the determined child, or the one with strongly directed nerve currents.

The second thing to do with an irritated child is to train him to expect and to be prepared for interruptions. He is set only for what he wants and is trained to do. But he has such a limited knowledge of the world that he does not know that we cannot always get what we want, and that a wise brain will also be trained to accept certain things it does not want. This kind of training is not easy. It is a slow process for a child to adapt itself to deflections from the trained path, and not to regard them as real disappointments. An obstructed want is more disturbing and costly for the determined child than it is for a phlegmatic youngster. Little rewards could be granted an irritable child for patience at deflections, and little punishments of a psychological nature for irritations could be meted out to him in the way of deprivations, such as refusing him certain privileges. But in all of this training there should be an understanding of the child's trouble and a strong sympathy. An unsympathetic attitude would be very detrimental.

The remedy for irritation in the adult because of an opposition to a mental set is now plain. He should be mentally set not only for what he wants, but for what he *does not want.* Making this attitude a part of the mental set, or the nerve tendency, makes the difference between irritation and its absence.

The author has a friend who went to a county teachers' association meeting to deliver a lecture. Just when he was introduced and began to speak, a dinning noise was set up just outside of the window close to the platform. Two plumbers were breaking a drainpipe with a sledge hammer. The distraction was terrific. The audience could not hear the speaker. He himself hardly heard his own voice, and his thoughts went on a riot. He had not the least idea what to say next. He called the superintendent of schools to the platform and asked whether the noise could be stopped. To his astonishment he was told that the plumbers were hired for the afternoon by the school board and could not be asked to leave. In other words, the plumbers had as much right to be present as the lecturer.

It was a trying ordeal. What was my friend to do but *adapt* himself to the situation and include the plumbing in his mental set? It was ludicrous for him to set his mind to speak and at the same time to set it for a noise that was out of the ordinary. Plumbers and speakers do not mix, but he mixed them. He steeled himself to realize, however ludicrous, that the plumbers had as much right there as he himself. They were getting paid as well as he. He set himself to expect interruptions and tremendous ones at that. In a way he trained himself to be interrupted. The result was that he gathered his thoughts together, delivered his speech well, and his strain was reduced to a minimum. If he had not included plumbers in his mental set to speak, he never could have spoken. The irony of the situation was that the speaker finally got along very well while the audience and superintendent were much annoyed by the plumbers—an attitude very contrary to their first dull, impassive air.

Now how does one include interruptions in his mental set? There is nothing complex or mysterious in doing it. It is simply a matter of assent of the mind. A person can do it *if he plans* to do so. He needs no outside help. Just the desire and willingness will bring about the result.

My friend could or could not have included the plumber in his mental set for speaking. It was a choice only for him to make. The executive himself had only to decide whether to include or not to include conferences in his office program for Tuesday. The businessman had only a decision to make to include social work as a companion to his business duties in one general set of the mind.

For the sake of mental efficiency and harmony, it is wise to be mentally prepared to accept interruptions, especially when they are right at our elbows, and we cannot handily escape them. Why people prepare themselves for irritations by being set against interruptions is another strange quirk of human nature. When they make themselves *irritable* by pointing the mind against interruptions and vowing and even declaring with vehemence that they will dislike any deflections from a set plan, they set themselves to be thrown into a tension when the interruption occurs. They even create tension before the interruption occurs because they fight these expected interruptions in their imagination, which always results in nerve and muscle strain. They punish their own minds. However, to prepare the mind for interruptions and even to plan for them, to organize everything to be experienced during the day as natural and normal, even including so-called intrusions, makes the mind pretty well unified. It is ready to accept deflections, as well as the items included in the positive work of the day. Of course, there is a little and sometimes quite a strain in including distractions in a mental set, but it is less than there would be if they were not included. For the sake of one's mental welfare, distractions should be turned into assets as much as possible.

A woman doing her housework of a busy Saturday morning could make her tasks a great burden by saying to herself that she does not want and will not tolerate door peddlers and other "pests." She would be better off to include them in the day's work mentally, even though she might politely refuse to buy any goods. Salesmen, however, or their sales managers, would do well to stage psychological campaigns to make solicitors easy inclusions in the program for the day.

Where does suggestion play a part in respect to this problem of the right sort of mental set? It is in regard to the way a person sets his mind against interruptions. This kind of a set is held in faith, without any doubt. It is held without ever questioning its value. It is an idea planted in the center of the mind and unconditionally accepted, and, as a consequence, it goes automatically into action by helping to form a tensionless mind. We get what we are prepared for in respect to irritations.

The law of readiness reveals an easy mind. The law of unreadiness does not. In the latter case a person is poised for a disturbance and it generally comes. He generally creates his own irritations, and not an outsider.

Irritations, therefore, as a result of faulty pointings of the mind, need not be an unsolved problem in this present generation of speed and the crowded hour. The human mind has never yet reached the limit of its power of production if in a healthy body. A man can meet the multitudinous changes and interruptions of the day if he understands and practices the law of readiness in a comprehensive manner, which is but another name for the proper setting of the mind to expect the unexpected.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the condition of the body in ill health that easily makes for irritability?

2. What is a good test to show when an individual is pushing his nerves beyond his natural speed?

3. Why are excited nerves taken as a sign of efficient endeavor?

4. Illustrate three kinds of dislikes associated with certain stimuli that are only chance associations.

5. Can you point to an analogy in nature of the meaning of a mental set? Is priming something common in nature?

6. Have you ever tried to turn distractions into the regular order of the day?

7. Why may interruptions be entirely a relative matter?

XVIII

RELAXATION

Straining breaks the bow, and
relaxation relieves the mind.
SYRUS

I. THE TENSE MODERN LIFE

If someone should ask, "What is one of the greatest needs of the human mind today?" the answer could easily be "relaxation."

The tenseness of modern life is its outstanding quality. How much more intense we are today as compared with a century ago may be debatable, although there is little doubt as to the intensity of modern life.[1] It should also be noted that the great increase of mental cases is due in part at least to the improved method of listing mental diseases, many of which in the past were unrecognized. But the fact remains that the key to present-day living is tenseness.

So many stimuli are bombarding the human nervous system that it is not given time to assimilate them. The bewildering crash of impressions from the movies; the avalanche of sharply variegated books and magazines; the crowded city life with its kaleidoscopic motion of events—all tend to keep the nerves on edge. They are pushed and driven to the limit, and no time is allowed for cooling-off periods.

Added to the bombardment of rapid-fire impressions is the crowding of the nerves with the mania of speed. We race from one activity to another as though quality were a matter of hurry. Souls are saved in church by the clock, and even love itself can no longer wait upon time for a courtship. Insurance companies stress the significant fact that heart disease today leads all others in its death-dealing demands. The strain, the worry, and the rush of modern life are making a premium of a stout heart. State appropriations for mental institutions are growing. Doctor Charles H. Mayo of the famous Mayo Clinic said in 1931 that every other bed in hospitals is a mental case. The keyed-up nerve is a great American disease of today. Relaxation must be psychologically studied and practiced if human efficiency is to be saved or promoted.

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[1] Burns, L. D., *Civilization on Trial* (1931).

II. RELAXATION DURING THE WORK PERIOD

The common understanding of relaxation is that it is a mental condition to be generated when we are through with the day's work. But a major problem of relaxation is a person's state of mind when he is in the *factory* or *office*. The taut nerve needs to be unstrung during the actual work of the day in order that we may learn the habit of relaxation.

Another misunderstanding concerning relaxation is that rest is associated too much with doing nothing—with a total cessation of activity—a vacation in the mountains or at the seashore. But this kind of rest does not fill the great need for relaxation, for it is a faulty mentality during working conditions that causes the frayed nerve. When a person returns to work after such a rest, he steps right into a tenseness that undoes him again. Such a rest is merely a temporary escape from the problems at hand; it is merely putting salve on the sore while the real trouble is neglected. A man can overcome a problem only by working it out where it occurs. F. W. Robertson, the famous English divine, said that "true rest is not that of torpor, but that of harmony; it is not refusing the struggle, but conquering it; not resting from duty, but finding rest in it." Unless we learn to relax during the work period, a rest from work is just a superficial solution of the relaxation problem. Relaxation must more and more be associated with work if the human brain is to be saved from energy-consuming modern life.

A. Need of an Energy Rhythm

An individual should have a certain rhythm for the day, whether native or acquired, in which he has his rises and falls of energy. A person may reach his high peak of production in the late morning, and another in the late afternoon, or the energy outlet may rise gradually and reach its peak only in the evening. Individual differences are quite marked in the rise and fall of energy during the day.

Each person should adapt his activities as far as possible to his own rhythm. A heavy activity in the early morning may burden the nervous system of one individual, but not that of another; or the interjection of a petty activity in the peak of energy outlet may cause an unwelcomed drop in energy. Items for the day should, therefore, be appraised in value and be scheduled for the time when the energy can best be used. This planning prevents fatigue, which may be caused by only a waste of energy. A proper time for a task is then another means of relaxation. Difficulty will naturally be experienced in scheduling one's activities to suit oneself, for a man often has to meet the demands of the office or shop schedule, which may not suit his easy rises and falls of energy; but he can do a great deal in preparing for these forced schedules by preparing the mind for them early in the day. He might even change his day's rhythm to suit them, for it has not been proved that a man cannot change the time of his energy peaks.

B. Differential Relaxation

Another excellent means of relaxation is that of employing just the minimum muscle tension necessary for work, thereby completely relaxing the other muscles. This is necessary even when we are following the two demands just discussed. A man may be prepared for a task and have it come at the right time, but he may use too many muscles. We drive our cars with too many muscles; the housewife washes her dishes with too many muscles; the executive sits at his desk with too many muscles; the spectator hears an address with too many muscles; the social guest listens to her music with too many muscles. All of us are taut and tight in our musculature as we go about our daily programs. It is as though we are trying to enjoy life according to the amount of muscle tension we can muster up.

In our various bodily positions during the active part of the day we create needless muscle tensions—introducing so many that their combined effect makes the energy load much greater than is necessary. Energy is escaping; the fatigue line is brought closer. Then this extra muscle tension is accompanied by extra nerve tension. If this extra energy expenditure were made with little effort, we would not feel much of an ill effect; but it is generally made because the person is keyed-up all over. It is a result of high-pressure living.

Jacobson,[2] of the physiological laboratory of the University of Chicago, has found in his many years of experimentation on relaxation that people can thoroughly relax by relaxing the muscle system. He advocates working from outside inward and sees no need of first making the mind a "blank." The psychologist would be glad to supplement this physiological method by emphasizing the mental aspect of relaxation, for a man must at least *think* relaxation (suggestion) before he can relax. Jacobson inadvertently emphasizes the psychological aspect by saying that a person's distracting thought processes in the form of worry and anxiety should be removed. *A person cannot relax his muscles if the mind is not willing to relax.*

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[2] Jacobson, E., *Progressive Relaxation* (1929), Chap. VI.

But it is interesting to note that anyone can relax by putting his mind on his muscles, although a relaxing mental attitude is, of course, necessary. The main direction of attention is thus upon the muscles, or their sensations. The auto driver can relax by directing his attention to loosening the tight muscles in his neck; the girl sitting at her machine can relax by directing her attention to the letting down of leg muscles; the bricklayer can relax by directing his attention to letting down the muscles of the hips and legs not required for his job.

C. *Progressive Relaxation*

Jacobson has discovered that it takes careful training to relax any set of muscles. Even when a person thinks he is relaxed, a galvanometer attached to a set of muscles may show too great an electrical discharge, thus indicating too much tension. Jacobson's plan of relaxation is progressive. He advocates starting in with just one set of muscles, say the biceps of the left arm, and training oneself to detect in them muscle tension. This can be done by having the subject contract the muscles first, and then seeing whether he can experience the muscle sensation due to this contraction. This may require a long practice period for some people, and help may be required; but after a person can detect the least muscle tension, he will readily know just what to do—namely, carry out the very *opposite* or perfect relaxation with no experience of muscle sensation. After he trains himself to detect tension in bicep muscles, he then may turn to other muscles of the left arm, then to the right arm, then to legs, abdomen, chest, and last of all to the head. The training is progressive because it goes only from one group of muscles to another, never trying to relax the entire body at once. Jacobson says that an individual should relax a muscle group even beyond the point where it appears to be perfectly relaxed, to insure perfect relaxation. But a person should not *try* to relax, or he will not relax. Here is another psychological method that supplements inadvertently the physiological method. An individual should relax by not paying much attention to it. Relaxation cannot be properly understood and experienced unless it is practiced at least one hour a day for the period required to learn perfect relaxation.

If workers and socialites alike learned to relax muscles not needed for the moment—differential relaxation—and followed the principle of progressive relaxation, they would be well repaid for the effort. The method would provide the best working condition for the body and thus prepare them for the highest efficiency, for Jacobson and others have learned that vigorous and efficient activity is the result of an *economy* of energy expenditure. It is probably true that the greatest amount of work, and also the best quality of work, is done with a smooth expenditure of energy. We have seen this excellent principle exemplified in dancing, singing, acrobatics, and other forms of artistic motion. Yet we constantly think that the best work of the human body is done with an orgy of energy output.

D. Control of Emotions

The study of emotions will reveal that every emotion is an unstrung condition of the body, both inside and out. Fear in its most pronounced state almost and even at times entirely paralyzes the body; worry and anxiety produce knots of tension everywhere, particularly in the brows and eyes; embarrassment finds the pharynx loaded with tensions; fright finds one with a seizure of the solar plexus; self-consciousness brings a very disturbed state to the lower part of the esophagus and diaphragm; hate sets the shoulders, arms, neck, mouth, and jaws into a vicelike grip; sorrow and other depression emotions loosen the muscles, and make us limp.

Hence every emotion is very costly in the regulation of energy, which is dissipated and wasted. It takes a great deal of power to start and maintain an emotion. An abundance of force is required to keep a storm going, and every emotion is equivalent to a bodily storm.

Going constantly from one bad emotion to another, as many do, puts the body under a very heavy strain, incurring a huge waste of energy. It is not the quiet filtering away of energy, but the turbulent outlet that disorganizes the entire organism. It is then not strange that numerous and disturbing emotions of the day are taking a heavy toll of efficiency. Then after the body is weakened by the strain of one emotion, such as anger, hate, or jealousy, it is easily susceptible to other emotions, such as irritation and worry. A body worn by emotion is ready to explode at any time, and a slight apprehension may thus be turned into a mountain of fear.

Prevention of emotion is always the best remedy to solve the emotion problem, but this requires getting away from the emotional situation, which is not always possible. Often a wife cannot leave a gruff and inconsiderate husband. The best practical remedy is control *in* the emotion-provoking situation. The human mind must learn to control emotions as one important means of relaxation, if much of the strain of modern living is to be eliminated, and efficiency and poise are to be maintained.

E. Short Periods of Daily Relaxation

Another good means of relaxation is a complete cessation of work activities for very short periods during the day. Even six such periods would provide the needed relaxation, stave off early fatigue, and even generate a reserve of strength at the close of the work period. Some men during crises have had to resort to such a method as an almost exclusive substitute for sleep.

A friend of the author's was a recruiting manager in New York City during the World War. He had to work long and feverishly, organizing his speaking campaign and setting up truck speaking-stands in all parts of the city. An average day for him was twenty-one hours. But he was always fresh and energetic and his friends marveled at his strength. However, he explained that he was not naturally endowed with much strength. His secret was in the withdrawal from all work for a few minutes a number of times a day, and completely resting his mind. If riding in the New York subway, he would not consume his precious energy by excitedly reading newspapers, but would conserve it by quietly taking a nap. He would not spend his eating hour talking to cronies over the table and deciding the fate of the universe; he ate in perfect relaxation and after lunch would take a quiet nap in a secluded place for ten minutes. He carried his bed around with him, as it were, and the actual bed was cheated of many hours.

Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., was said to have the knack of casting cares aside during the rush of the day in the White House for short periods. In a remarkably short time he could lose himself in complete repose. Edison could relax during the day on a hard laboratory table with only books for a pillow. Certain executives of state, premiers of countries, and great industrialists have attributed their resiliency of mind and body to the habit of stealing away from the rush of work for short periods.

The deceptive feeling of tension leads a person to think that he is accomplishing great things, and he hence experiences a thrill at living; but it is only the overwrought nerve that has turned into a sharp edge. Housewives, busy mothers, and hurried executives must learn the secret of short periods of relaxation if the continued efficiency of the human organism is to be preserved. When this secret is won, perhaps people will not need to spend much time away from work futilely endeavoring to rest their nerves.

Nervous energy is not to be driven in a hard straight line for eight, ten, or sixteen hours. The nerve current has its rise and fall. It functions in a rhythm. The entire organism has its rise and fall of energy; but this wise natural law is violated. We whip our nervous systems into action and goad them on by the crack of the lash. But the introduction of short daily rest periods provides nature with the needed relaxation of energy.

But the difficulty is that even when people want to meet the need of daily relaxation, they do not know how. They cease their labors, but do not cease their muscular and mental activities. They are outwardly quiet, but their minds are still tense with their work problems, or they mentally quit their problems, but their musculature is tense. Many times there is also a simultaneous tenseness of mind and body.

A double exercise is necessary for these short relaxing periods. The first is autosuggestion, shutting out every thought of work and difficulty, and letting the mind drift into ideas of repose. A thought of peaceful nature or rhythmic music, listening to the tick of the clock, or even counting the proverbial sheep going over the fence, are conducive to relaxation. All the various prescriptions for repose, whether counting sheep, goats, or mules, whether thinking of your breathing rate, wallpaper designs, or the swishes of the wind, are for the purpose of inducing quiet rhythm—a necessary condition for relaxation. Even exclusively thinking of the words "rest" or "repose" provides an individual with this soothing rhythm. But this restful thought, whatever form it may take, must be maintained without argument, and hence by suggestion.

However, attention to restful ideas is not all that is necessary for these daily relaxation periods. Direct attention must be given to one's muscles. Often the attempt to relax mentally is thwarted because the muscles are too tight. Progressive relaxation should be practiced on all the skeletal muscles—experiencing how a muscle feels when tense, and then learning to lose all of this tension.

Attention to restful muscles, and at the same time to restful thoughts, are needed to relax satisfactorily during these short intervals. Some would prescribe only one of these types. But, as we have just mentioned, attention to restful thinking may be easily prevented by tight muscles, and, conversely, attention just to relaxing muscles may be prevented because of disturbed thinking. Relaxation is always a joint job of mind and body.

F. Laughter and the Smile as Relaxation

A very good reason exists for the splendid lift occasioned by the hearty laugh. It is always said to be a tonic and a medicine—the laughing experience carrying with it an effect of well-being, and especially the feeling of a most enjoyable relaxation.

Four principal theories of laughter should be mentioned. One is that laughter is a release from prohibitions, as suggested by Freud.[3] According to this conception, the condemnation of the lewd joke or the salacious story makes many people anxious to break away from the prohibition against them. The heartiest laughter is often over the joke that cannot be openly told. It is the restraint from freedom that brings this laugh. If there were a prohibition against breathing more than twelve times a minute, there would be a hearty laugh if a group were told that a certain individual surreptitiously worked in a thirteenth breath. A prisoner may give a hearty laugh when he is sure that he has safely escaped from the guards. He may also laugh heartily because he has filched a little sugar from the table to be used in the making of a little "hootch" in his cell. Poor people, in their feeling of restraint, are glad to tell jokes upon the wealthy, in order to provide themselves an outlet for their tensions.

Undoubtedly the laughter at the expense of a prohibition does provide a relaxation, but it is too dearly bought. It implies too much of a feeling of restraint for the individual, instead of a free and easy willingness to accept certain cultural restrictions.

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[3] Brill, A. A., *Psychoanalysis* (3rd ed., 1922), pp. 419 ff.

Laughter has also been explained as a display of superiority. Aristotle[4] said that comedy is an imitation of a lower type of human living than that adopted by the imitator. Here laughter is degrading to the object or person laughed at. It is the derisive laugh that belittles. Hobbes[5] also advocated the theory that laughter is an outlet for the feeling of superiority over things and persons. Addison believed in the same theory when he said that pride is the chief cause of laughter.

The derisive laugh is an outlet for the unpleasant tension that a person feels between himself and the degraded object. Witness the relief that comes when an enemy is slain and the victor steps upon the conquered head. But such a means of relaxation is hardly to be commended as a high stage of culture.

The third theory is that advocated by Patrick,[6] who says that laughter is a rebellion against the strained and repressed situations of modern times, and implies a desire to go back to the primitive and the elementary. In other words, civilization with its dignified conventions is hard to endure, and we like to laugh to return to the undignified. We laugh at Charlie Chaplin in the movies because he represents the clumsy, tumbling, and falling freedom of primitive man. The word "damn" in a lumber camp would be unnoticed, but to hear it from the lips of a dignified professor produces a laugh. We laugh at the man chasing his wind-blown hat because it is a release from our usual stiff, stylish way of carrying our bodies and hats. The boy who falls down with a basket of eggs manifests a primitive awkwardness and is a laughing contrast to what his mother expects of him. A dog chasing his tail reveals a certain simplicity and ignorance which is so very different from modern sophistication that it promotes laughter. Sully[7] tells of a traveler who visited the house of an Indian chief in Canada and accidentally sat on one of his wives hidden in a bundle of buffalo robes: "The chief and his wife shrieked with laughter." Granting that this theory be true, it indicates a breaking from restraint by relaxing to a freer manner of behavior.

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[4] Aristotle, *Poetics* (translated by Butcher), Vol. IV.

[5] Hobbes, T., *Human Nature*, Chap. IX, p. 13.

[6] Patrick, G. T. W., *The Psychology of Relaxation* (1916), Chaps. II, III.

[7] Sully, James, *An Essay on Laughter* (London, 1902).

The fourth and last theory explains laughter as elicited by odd and incongruous situations. Kant[8] said that laughter is caused by a "nullification of expectation," meaning that an expectation is met with nothing or something very incongruous. Schopenhauer[9] also advocated this incongruity theory. Looking at a dignified lecturer in formal evening attire would occasion a laugh if we saw his shirt unbuttoned in front and his underwear showing. We laugh at the "hayseed" in "The Old Homestead" when he mails a letter in the mail box in the city and expects it to go down a chute and immediately be shot on its way to the country to greet his wife. Herbert Spencer[10] taught the same theory when he said that laughter is occasioned by "an effort which suddenly encounters a void," as, for instance, when it is announced on the vaudeville stage that a giant is about to appear and then only a pygmy comes before the audience. The neural energy is set in one direction and then suddenly encounters something very oddly different. Bergson[11] means the same thing when he says that laughter is primarily caused by "mechanical inelasticity," as when we see a free and easily moving individual suddenly sprawling on the pavement in the incongruous position of a mechanical doll.

Although this theory does not explain why we laugh at some incongruous situations and not at others, it is probably the best theory. Many situations around us are very incongruous and innocent in the sense that they do not entail injury or death, and any person could thus intersperse the daily activity in such situations with the relaxation of laughter. The resourcefulness of a man is praised when he can buckle down immediately to hard work, but perhaps a greater praise is due the person who can cease his labors for short periods and release his tensions through laughter. Anyone can readily let down his tensions by training himself to appreciate the humor in the numerous odd and queer situations about him.

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[8] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Bernard's trans.), 54, p. 223.

[9] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Brockhaus ed., 1877), II, p. 70.

[10] Spencer, H., "Physiology of Laughter," *Essays, Scientific, Political, and Speculative* (2nd Series), p. 452.

[11] Bergson, Henri, *Laughter* (trans. by Brereton and Rothwell, 1911).

What happens physiologically in a laugh is not quite known, but no doubt exists as to the relaxing experience elicited by laughter, and undoubtedly the nerve currents are given a free spread in the nervous system and tension knots are untied.

The first cousin to the laugh as a means of relaxation is the smile. We do not advise the artificial smile that is continually and conventionally assumed. It gives the effect of a smirk and reminds one of the Cheshire cat grin. This is the kind of smile that is meant when we are told to smile and smile; soon there are miles and miles of smiles. No one cares to see an individual smiling for a mile.

The better effect is secured by a *ready susceptibility* to a smile. Fortunate is the person who can readily smile. The smile need not be actually present, but if a person's state of mind is such that he may easily smile, he is in a splendid condition of relaxation. The attitude wins a warm social approval and prevents wearing of the nerves. By this susceptibility the mind is kept free from tension and goes on an even keel. Humor is thus constantly at hand and the wheels of the mind are kept well oiled.

III. RELAXATION AND SLEEP

A. Insomnia Problem Is Neglected

In any discussion of relaxation no subject is more important than sleep, for it is nature's method of recuperating the body. Inability to sleep is thought to be one of the necessary evils of life and nothing much can be done about it—like taxes and the weather. Consequently, insomnia is a neglected problem, and night after night the restless mind tosses back and forth, and there is little or no restoration of bodily energy. But a little study will indicate that it may be solved as well as other problems have been. Most of those who sleep well do so by a chance habit. But the great numbers who do not know how to sleep may increase their efficiency by a careful study of their sleep difficulty, and thus destroy one of the ills of mankind.

B. The Problem Tackled at the Wrong Time

People suffering from insomnia give little thought to the problem during the hours of the day except to weary others with repeated tales of how little they slept the night before. But everyone must "go to sleep" during the day as well as at night, and not wait for the still hours of darkness to learn the knack of sleeping. Jacobson[12] has discovered that those who fail to relax during the day do not relax at night. Those who burden their minds with worries and anxieties with no letup in the way of short relaxing periods during the day find it very difficult to sleep at night. No human being can live in a continual tension during the day and then—presto—expect to drop off in a sound slumber during the nocturnal hours. The human organism is not a miracle-working apparatus which can be keyed up by day and then suddenly dropped into an opposite state at night. A turbulent sea takes plenty of time to become quiet. Consequently, the tense unbroken activity of the day will continue far into the darkness. A person must learn to relax *during* his daily activities in order to relax *after* his daily activities.

There are many who sleep but are troubled with their dreams, and then the effect on the following day is the same as if they had suffered from insomnia. But here again what a man dreams is a result of his previous life. Dubois[13] says that a dream is only a continuation of the mental activity of the day. Freud[14] says that a dream indicates a suppressed unconscious wish coming to fulfillment. Whether they accept Freud or another authority, all theorists agree that a dream grows out of a person's previous life, and troubled dreams, therefore, indicate a troubled daily condition fraught with pressing unsolved problems. Restful sleep should first begin with a revision of one's manner of living to insure a controlled and evenly poised state of mind during the night. Whether a person is troubled with insomnia or bad dreams, nightly relaxation must begin in the waking hours.

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[12] Jacobson, E., *You Must Relax* (1934), Chap. XII.

C. Causes of Insomnia

Failure to sleep is necessarily due to either a mental or a physiological cause. If the latter, then psychology cannot play a part. A bodily injury, disease, pain, overfatigue, and indigestion readily serve notice upon the would-be sleeper that there might be a restless night ahead. Psychology is impotent to help in this situation. But too often the insomniac appeals to psychology for help when he does not know that the trouble is an undetected bodily ailment which often needs medical treatment.

1. The mental obstacle to sleep. The mental cause of insomnia is bad suggestion and is practiced through the medium of anxiety. Troubles and worries are not locked in the desk or bureau drawer upon retiring, but they are brought to bed as mischief-makers. Yet even when they are not bedfellows and a person's mind is free from troubles, an anxious state of mind is engendered because of the *fear* of not going to sleep. The suggestion starts during the day. "I do not think I shall sleep tonight. I always have trouble in going to sleep" is the idea planted in the mind of the insomniac *without* question. And many enjoy their recital of sleeplessness as an attention-getter.

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[13] Dubois, Paul, *The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders* (1905), p. 342.

[14] Freud, Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913).

This suggestion is present upon retiring. Its first state is a fear-idea that one will not sleep. This fear is very disturbing. "I am afraid that I shall not have much strength for tomorrow's work. I just *must* get to sleep. Here I lie minute after minute draining my energy little by little when I should be replenishing it"—these are the agitated thoughts that keep the insomniac in good insomniacal form.

Since anxiety, or fear, of not going to sleep sets up a pronounced bodily activity as a second step—as every emotion of fear does—the would-be sleeper keeps himself awake by trying too hard to sleep. He defeats his own desires.

We know that the primary condition of sleep is a cessation of bodily activity, particularly of outside muscles. Jacobson[15] has discovered with his experiments on relaxation that the more free the skeletal muscles are from tension the nearer a person is to sleep. We also know this fact from general observation. It is the quieting of the body that puts us to sleep and the movement of the body that awakens us. Of course, the automatic movements, such as the heartbeat, metabolic processes, and glandular secretions, never cease in sleep; but it is very necessary that the skeletal musculature be in a very quiescent state. It is impossible for the skeletal muscles to lose absolutely all tension, for Johnson[16] has shown in his experiments that the average person moves in his sleep by turning over or changing position at least once every twelve minutes. Movement of outside muscles, therefore, appears to be a natural part of sleep. But in between these periodic movements there must be a very relaxed condition of skeletal musculature.

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[15] Jacobson, E., *loc. cit.*

[16] Johnson, H. M., and Weigand, G. E., "The Measurement of Sleep," *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Academy of Science*, 2: 43–48 (1927).

Anxiety about not going to sleep keeps the body in too restless a state; outside, or skeletal, muscles are highly keyed up. It takes a great deal of skeletal muscular movement to keep any emotion going, and especially anxiety or fear, which are perhaps our most moving emotions. The very essential purpose of emotion is to produce outside bodily movement. No emotion can exist without greatly disturbing the body.

Since lessening of outside muscle tonus is a necessary condition for sleep, the insomniac, therefore, keeps himself awake by wanting too hard to go to sleep. Merely lying awake will not result in much harm. Insomnia itself, as many nerve specialists have found, is not harmful. Many persons have had insomnia for many years—even for most of their adulthood—and live to an old age. A person can greatly relax merely by lying awake in bed, *if he frees his mind from disturbing factors.* Often this sleepless relaxation is as good as sleep, which may be troubled with bad dreams and weak bodily conditions. It is the emotion of anxiety or fear that tags along with insomnia that does the harm. What we ordinarily mean by insomnia is not just a quiet sleeplessness, or just a mere idea that we are not sleeping, but a stabbing state of mind induced by the sharp pangs of anxiety.

D. The Remedy for Insomnia

The remedy for insomnia, caused by an emotional disturbing state of mind, is obviously to quell the disturbance. This can be done only by changing bad into good suggestion.

As we have said, the bad suggestion that we shall not sleep during the coming night starts during the day. It is not deliberated upon or questioned. It is accepted in its entirety—on its face value—and coupled with it is this emotion of anxiety that leads to a wide-awake mind.

The substitute for this sort of suggestion is, of course, the opposite one. No mysterious remedy need be sought. Yet the proposed remedy is as effective as it is simple. The best way to sleep is *not to care whether one sleeps or not.*

This remedy is not strange in the least, for we have said that insomnia in itself is not harmful; the disturbing factor is only the fear-idea that goes with it. Consequently, if a person should lie awake and feel that he is relaxing and the body is recuperating its forces, even though he is not actually asleep, he would be playing right into the hands of nature and be securing a good rest. Dubois[17] says, "Sleep is like a pigeon. It comes to you if you have the appearance of not looking for it; it flies away if you try to catch it."

A good illustration of the principle of the "*don't-care*" attitude can be seen in a summer camp where chipmunks are plentiful. If you deliberately attempt to catch the animal, it will run away. But if you keep very quiet and act *unconcerned*, the little streak of fur may soon come quite close and then finally eat out of your hand. The same thing is true of sleep. If you don't care whether you slumber or not, it is the very best invitation that sleep can receive. We can't woo sleep and win it. We win it only by restful indifference.

It takes time to re-educate the mind to settle into this nonwooing state, but it can be adopted and proved a sleep-getter, as the author and many others can testify from experience. If a person has no anxiety, how can he be restless and fail to sleep, provided the bodily condition is good?

Attention should also be given one's musculature to see that it is relaxed, and each large group of muscles should be taken one at a time and freed from tension. The head is the last to receive attention for relaxation, but it is perhaps the seat of the most disturbing kind of muscle tension. Jacobson discovered that around the mouth and eyes the tense individual has his greatest difficulty. His tight muscles are loud alarm clocks to keep him awake. Relaxation of eyes and mouth muscles are like the arms of Morpheus. Taking a hot bath upon retiring, drinking a warm broth, or taking a long walk also are aids in relaxing the body.

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[17] Dubois, Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

Both the psychological and the physiological method should be employed. Attention should be given to right suggestion. The "*don't-care*" attitude should be adopted and every trace of arguing with oneself should be abandoned. It should be adopted with perfect faith or belief. If a person questions it, the benefit will cease, for its excellent suggestive effect will cease. An easy state of mind and a tenseless body solves the problem of insomnia, barring a bodily disorder.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think life today is more tense than in previous generations?

2. What would be some good methods of relaxation during working hours for the factory worker?

3. Do you think we are burdening our minds with *too many* activities during the day?

4. What is the trouble with people who fail to profit from the "counting-sheep" or "counting-the-wall-paper-designs" methods for aiding sleep?

5. Are the leisure activities of modern life conducive to relaxation?

6. What is meant by saying that some people enjoy their insomnia?

7. What is the relation of sleep to relaxation?

8. Would we devote about one third of our lives to sleep if we could properly relax during the day?

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XIX

ANGER

Anger seeks its prey—something to tear
with sharp-edged tooth and claw.
GEORGE ELIOT

I. PREVALENCE OF ANGER

It is obvious that anger is an emotion common to all people in every country. It is so prevalent that it is not surprising that anger was classified as an instinct by previous psychologists and is still so named by a certain remaining group of instinct exponents. Surely, this group says, something so widespread and easily evoked must be innate.

Perhaps this is the reason why very little is done to get rid of it. People accept their anger as a very troublesome factor in their lives, but they regard it as a necessary inherited evil which cannot be eliminated. Very few individuals ever spend as much as a week in trying to cure themselves of this perpetual disturber of mental poise.

But people do not endeavor to get rid of their habit of anger not only because they regard it as a fatalistic ingredient of the human mind, but also because they do not know how to get rid of it.

II. TWO KINDS OF ANGER

No doubt is entertained as to whether a person should get rid of worry or irritability, but there is a question in the minds of many whether anger should be eliminated. The layman exclaims, "Well, I wouldn't give a fig for a person without a temper," and this opinion is generally accepted.

In a survey conducted yearly in his psychology classes, the author never found a group which as a whole had a strong conviction that anger should be entirely eradicated from one's life. On the contrary, there was a very vigorous defense of its merits by some. A person is expected to have spunk to win respect, it was said, and anger, occasionally displayed, was thought to be a main ingredient of that quality.

Then there is a defense of anger in the form of "righteous indignation" advocated for centuries by pulpit and press. Stratton[1] makes a strong plea for its justified place in the world in this "sublimated" form. He says that it is an achievement in human progress, that anger has been the motivating force in promoting warfare and political organizations, that we owe much to it for our social life, for the family, commerce, class, and the institutions of law; that anger has been of service in keeping conscience pure and unsullied; that it is used freely in the service of God to make people "feel it hot against the enemies of faith" and against those who refuse submission.

The view expressed in Stratton's discussion is representative in general of the pulpit and press. The defense of a country's honor, of the sacredness of the family, of the inviolate character of public institutions, of the glory of a religious faith has been sometimes maintained through the recognized method of righteous indignation.

But righteous indignation is very different from the ordinary, garden variety of anger as displayed by an individual.

(1) In the first place, righteous indignation is impersonal in two senses, whereas ordinary anger is very personal.

(a) A person who is indignant is not necessarily settling a *personal* grudge. His own *personal* self might not be insulted. It must then be an impersonal cause which has been abused—a principle that is far above the personal plane. The principle of the family may be abused, the honor of the country, or the sacredness of religion. These do not necessarily grow out of a *particular* situation of a *particular* individual where the individual has been directly and personally insulted.

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[1] Stratton, G. M., *Anger: Its Religious and Moral Significance* (1923).

The garden variety of anger, on the contrary, as we shall show later, is generally very personal in origin. It is a matter of a particular situation of a particular individual, and the particular score to settle might not be duplicated in a million men. This sort of anger is concerned *only* with a problem of a particular self and if it concerns a super-personal principle, it does so by coincidence and not by a conscious intent.

(b) The second way in which righteous indignation is used in an impersonal sense is in respect to the object which is opposed. What is generally railed against is not a person, but a condition or violation of a guarded principle. If a minister or a journalist becomes personal in crusading against a certain evil, then he immediately loses most of his force. Evils are considered something more than a particular machination of a particular individual. Evils are general, and if a particular individual were singled out for an onslaught of wrath, it would be taken as a personal attack and the public would prefer that such a quarrel be settled in the backyard and not clothed in the garment of righteous indignation. Of course, evils are embodied in individuals as their exponents, but the attack in righteous indignation is against the *evil* and not against the man.

In the common variety of anger, on the other hand, there is always a personal attack. This sort of anger does not care to fight against violations of principles. It is not so scientific and aloof. It is purely and simply a personal matter aimed not only to satisfy a personal affront, but also to attack a *person* with no desire to be a warrior for worthy causes. It aims only to smash the self of the other man, as we shall show later. It is just as personal in its function as righteous indignation is impersonal. When Johnny gets mad at Jimmy, he does not feel that he is the "defender of the faith."

(2) Then, in the next place, righteous indignation by its very nature is dignified and controlled. There is mastery of both mind and body. An indignant person talks and acts in an *orderly* manner, though words and actions are impregnated with the "fire of wrath." A speaker occasionally loses control of himself in displaying a righteous indignation, but when he does so, his best effect is lost and listeners feel that he has got away from the impersonal issue and is acting as if he himself manufactured the principle defended. He has left the righteous and indignant phase of the situation and become personal.

In respect to the garden variety of anger, on the contrary, there is no control. It is not the dignified expression of oneself tinged with the flame of wrath but only an explosion without any control. It is an undoing of the mind and is no organized expression of the self. Quite the contrary!

When we consider the impersonal and orderly expression of righteous indignation and the opposite for common anger, it is a question whether the former should ever be called anger. To avoid confusion in discussing the subject it is well to understand clearly this distinction. If it should be asked whether anger is justified from the first standpoint, there would be little disagreement. If it should be asked whether personal anger is justified, there is obviously but one answer. The author adopts the latter conception, which is based on the *disorderly* aspect of emotion as advocated by psychologists.[2]

Anger in this personal sense becomes a problem of mental hygiene, and some light should be thrown on its cause and function, with a view to eliminating it from the mind.

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[2] See Bentley, M., *The Field of Psychology* (1924), Chap. III.

III. RESTRAINT AS THE OCCASION FOR ANGER

As we know, the occasion for anger in an infant is physical restraint. If a baby's arms are pinioned to its sides, or a hand is held over its mouth, or its legs are held fixed, it will begin at once to show signs of anger. If the restraint is continued, the reaction might become very intense. If continued too long, the baby might be thrown into a convulsion. Then his face will redden; his screams will become louder; he will writhe in an attempt to extricate himself; his digestive apparatus will be seriously disturbed, and he might even vomit as a result.

Later, the restraint also becomes mental. The child or adult becomes angry when a plan has been frustrated, when his pride and reputation have been insulted, when he has failed to receive the proper respect from a working inferior, when another has been guilty of disloyalty, and so forth. The situation that sets off anger is always one that hampers. The self has been hemmed in. It may be said that we get angry over something not a part of our lives and which does not mean a personal hampering, such as the mistreatment of a child or the unnecessary slaughter of soldiers in war. But there is a sense of possession in these situations; because we are sympathetic, we put ourselves in the position of the child or the soldier receiving such unjustifiable treatment. We can both sympathetically and actually possess. We can be sympathetically or actually hampered. Sympathetic anger may be both impersonal and personal.

But this physical and mental restraint is only the outward factor in respect to anger. It is only the *occasion* and not the *cause*, and yet we constantly think of the occasion in terms of the cause. The cause of anger lies on the *inside* and not on the *outside* of the mind.

IV. THE CAUSE OF ANGER

The most common misunderstanding concerning personal anger is as to its cause. A clearing up of this point would throw a new light on the meaning of and remedy for this prevalent emotion that is very racking to the human being.

Almost everyone blames anger on another person, or upon a personified object. The besmirched family name, the insulted personal pride, the careless neglect of a responsibility, the inexcusable commitment of a mistake resulting in anger make us throw the blame on the perpetrator of the affront. Where else could it be? If we throw the responsibility on another, we feel perfectly justified in getting angry because Mr. or Mrs. Blank *made* us so. There is implied in this attitude the idea that this emotion is created by those who have hampered us or our plans.

But no *other* person makes us angry. The perpetrator furnishes only the *occasion* for anger. The cause lies right within one's own mind. It arises from a sense of inward defeat. A person in anger indicates that he has been mentally cornered, that the insult shot his way has shattered him, that, in other words, he has been frustrated. Anger arises from a feeling of frustration.

An insult or anything that hampers another individual in regard to his physical movements or his plans is one thing, and a defeat is another. There is no necessary connection between the two. One may follow the other, but that is not because one must *bring on* the other. If obstructing stimuli were the *cause* of anger, then anger would *always* result from it. "Given a cause and its proper conditions, a result will always follow"—this is a law of physics. If hampering an individual were a cause of anger, the latter would always follow. But it does not always follow. An individual may receive an affront and yet remain calm and composed. *Being hampered does not necessarily include a mental defeat.* The thwarting is only in respect to an individual's movements or a particular plan and does not necessarily carry with it a thwarting of the mind, which means a flattening of his sense of importance. When an individual engages in personal anger, it is always a sign that his pride has been twisted and worsted. The ego has been made to feel that it has been given a poor and degrading estimate. Being thwarted and being defeated are not by any means synonymous.

The individual who maintains his dignity though insulted does not allow a defeat of his mind, but prevents it by humor, by laughing it off, by a cold stinging sarcastic retort, or by a quiet way of refuting the enemy. For instance, when Wendell Phillips[3] was lecturing in Ohio, he was riding in a railroad coach in which there were a number of clergymen returning from a convention. One of the ministers felt called upon to approach the emancipator, and asked, "Are you Mr. Phillips?" "I am, sir." "Are you trying to free the niggers?" "Yes, sir, I am an abolitionist." "Well, why do you preach your doctrines up here? Why don't you go over into Kentucky?" "Excuse me," said Mr. Phillips, "Are you a preacher?" "I am, sir." "Are you trying to save souls from hell?" "Yes, sir, that's my business." "Well, why don't you go there?" Mr. Phillips could have retorted in anger, but he used a better and more effective way.

The cause of anger lies right within one's own mind and nowhere else. The only thing that comes from another is the opposition to a movement or a desire. The mental corner in which a person finds himself is created *by* himself and is due to the weakness of his mind. Anger is always an indication that the individual hasn't strength enough to hold his own or to prevent himself from being personally shoved into such narrow mental straits that he has to resort to the snarl of the animal to get out of it. We might not be able to help ourselves from being put into a physical corner or having our plans hampered, but only an individual himself can bring about a mental defeat. He himself is the only one to let down his mastery and reveal anger. Personal anger is, therefore, always a sign of weakness. Yet the cause of anger is not generally accepted as being within a man's own mind. Every outburst of anger is a sign that the sense of the self has been attacked, and the siege has been successful. But the cause of this humiliation is a person *himself* letting down the walls of his *own* self-respect.

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[3] See Brill, A. A., *Psychoanalysis* (3rd ed., 1922), p. 426.

V. ANGER, A COMPENSATION

But if anger is caused by a self-undermining of the ego occasioned by an affront, it has a special function to perform. If born out of mental humiliation, it seeks to make up for this humiliation. Personal anger has only one mission to perform, and that is a resort to compensation. In this role of compensator it acts both as a defense and offense.

As a defensive weapon it is adopted to show that there is something in one's life that needs defending—a pride, or a self to be guarded. It is a defense of that which has been defeated.

As an offensive weapon it is used to defeat the "enemy." It is a measure of retaliation to even matters up. A man who gives himself over to anger virtually says to the affronter, "You have defeated me; I shall, therefore, defeat you. You have disregarded my rights; I shall also disregard your rights. Since you have crushed me, I must crush you in order that the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth shall be maintained." Naturally the offensive aspect of anger is the most important point.

We see in the offensive aspect of anger the reason for returning a worse punishment than was "received." Compensation always makes an exorbitant demand. The angry individual in attempting to crush the offender might say that he is paying him back in his own coin, but he generally never does. He nearly always pays him back in a worse coin. If I receive an insult and get angry over it, I return the insult with a greater one. If I receive a blow in the face and anger results, I may attempt to maul my enemy's face more seriously. If scandal has besmirched my name, and I resort to anger, I smear the scandal thicker upon my slanderer.

There is a simple psychological explanation for this overdrawn retaliation. Naturally a general in a war plans to attack the enemy with a greater force in order to defeat him. If he merely attacked with an equal force, there would be a question of victory. But by attacking with a greater force chances are much greater for success. It is obvious that the enemy cannot be defeated with a lesser force. And so the only choice left is an attack with the preponderance of power. Anger, therefore, in its very psychological setting, calls for a more impressive defeat of another than was administered. It is not a question of ethics. It is not a matter of fair play. Anger has nothing to do with either. It doesn't intend to abide by the "rules of the game." Anger is a warfare, and respect for the enemy is not in order. Anything to defeat him is the law of war. Anger as a war weapon does not know kindness or consideration, but is as ruthless as the law of the jungles. Personal anger is, therefore, primitive and barbarous. It is a war between people in which the offender is mentally slain. We may respect the physical person of another while in anger, but there is no respect for his mental integrity.

VI. THE BIOLOGICAL COST OF ANGER

The first cost of anger is the loss of a sense of self-importance by a weakening of self-mastery. The second is the loss of respect for another, and the third is the loss to the body. Cannon[4] has graphically described the disruption of the whole autonomic nervous system in emotion. The nerves that act as a conservative control over the vital organs in the torso region are rendered disabled in an emotion—and, therefore, in anger.

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[4] Cannon, W. B., *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear, and Rage* (1923), Chap. II.

We have three divisions of the autonomic: the cranial, controlling the nerves from the head; the sympathetic, controlling the nerves from the trunk or thoracico-lumbar region; and the sacral, controlling the lower division of the trunk. When all is going well and an individual is normal, these three divisions are in perfect harmony; the principal responsibility rests upon the cranial and sacral to insure a smoothly running body.

But when an emotion, and therefore anger, strikes the individual, this harmony ceases. The sympathetic wars against the cranial and sacral divisions and the vital organs are thrown into an undue excitement. The nerves from the sympathetic division have full control and disturb the vital organs. A cranial nerve, as we have said, conserves the health of the heart, but in an emotion the sympathetic nerve leading to it is in control and makes it "act up." A cranial nerve conserves, for instance, the health of the stomach, but in an emotion the sympathetic nerve is in control and upsets it. It is also true that a person can do very little clear thinking while under anger. The central nervous system is also disturbed. In fact, we reproach ourselves for the regrettable, impulsive things we do while under anger. Consideration is usually lacking, for the cerebrum is too excited for thinking.

Anger, then, is simply disruption of the entire nervous structure, and a person cannot be benefited by such a condition unless brute strength is necessary. Of course, there is an added strength[5] in anger or in any emotion because of the pouring out of extra amounts of adrenalin into the blood. We can clench our fists in anger with greater than normal strength.[6] But in how many situations do we require a greater than normal strength? Must we today protect with fists? We are no longer cavemen physically wrestling with wild beasts and fellow human beings for the preservation of our lives except in a case of actual war. Certainly a man doesn't need added physical strength to cope with an insult to his plan, his dog, or to the size of his head. And it even seems that the general on the battlefield can get along with his normal strength.

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[5] Cannon, W. B., op. cit. Chap. IV.

[6] Darwin, Charles R., *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1910), especially Chaps. I, II, III.

VII. IS PERSONAL ANGER EVER JUSTIFIED?

Considering the tone of our discussion of personal anger, it is perhaps unnecessary to ask whether this type is of any value. Yet many think that under certain circumstances it is justified. They say that in certain situations, such as, for instance, an insult to the family name or cruelty to the downtrodden, it is needed to save a person's self-respect. But would not righteous indignation be better? As we have shown, it is dignified and controlled, and yet it has enough of an emotional flavor about it to give strength and marvelous compelling power. Personal anger as a defense method ruins itself, for it either incurs laughter on the part of the offender, or it invites personal anger, which further inflames the enmity. Righteous indignation, on the other hand, may invite respect, for it is an orderly manner of redressing a wrong. Personal anger leaves the enemy still an enemy, whereas righteous indignation may win him to repentance. Losing control of oneself is ineffective for control of an affront. It always fans the fire.

Then some think that if an individual does not resort to personal anger to redress a wrong, he is a namby-pamby and weak individual. But a lack of personal anger does not mean that the "enemy" should not be reprimanded. As we have shown above, clever repartee may utterly dislodge the enemy without a single flash of anger and do it very effectively. A lack of personal anger does not mean that the offender should not be called down. We can condemn a wrong without being in the least ruffled and do it more successfully than in anger. If I am called "on the carpet" for a wrong in a cold and deliberate manner and "lectured," I tend to feel that I am getting my just deserts. But if personal anger enters the picture it becomes so obtrusive that it beclouds the issue. Naturally, the stormy effect of personal anger takes precedent over everything, and the individual receiving the butt of the blows is so much concerned with his belittlement, though really self-administered, that he forgets the wrong. Punishment is, therefore, always futile as a correction if delivered in anger. The child, or the adult, is then not corrected, but stews in his own self-humiliation, which overshadows all else. Personal anger defeats itself as a redresser of a wrong. It merely occasions another wrong in the unfair lowering of an individual's sense of self-importance. Righteous indignation, or a cool and calm reprimand, can be so administered as to reprove the wrong and save the pride of the offender. The individual is then impersonal in his attack. Personal anger never clears up any wrong.

Moreover, we have seen that personal anger is a manifestation of personal weakness, that it directs its piercing shafts to crush mentally the offender, and that it is biologically a disruption of the nervous systems of an individual with its attendant mental disruption. As a compensation, it does not intend to right a wrong. It merely evens up the score, and the wrong continues on its way.

Personal anger, by its very nature, is thus outlawed. If anyone thinks that showing a personal weakness, compensating for such a weakness for which an individual is responsible by brutally attacking the sanctity of another's ego with the wrong still unsettled, and throwing the body and mind into an ungeared condition, is right, then personal anger is in place. But who can rightly defend it in these terms, which are the only ones applicable? Culture or human advancement cannot sanction it. Personal anger belongs only to the ruthless level of the savage.

Summing up the characteristics of righteous indignation, of the cool reprimand, and of personal anger as methods of dealing with the offender, we have:

Righteous Indignation

(1) Is impersonal, above indulging in personalities.
(2) Directly attacks the wrong, and not the person.
(3) Has the drive of an emotion without being one.
(4) Is orderly.
(5) Is effective.

The Cool Reprimand

(1) Is impersonal.
(2) Directly attacks the wrong, and not the person.
(3) Is orderly, and not emotional.
(4) Has the drive of repose.
(5) Is effective.

Personal Anger

(1) Is personal.
(2) Does not attack the wrong, but the person.
(3) Is cheap compensation without meeting the issue.
(4) Is disorderly as an emotion, disrupting mind and body.
(5) Is ineffective.

VIII. REMEDIES FOR ANGER

A. *Knowing the Real Cause*

It is perhaps clear now just what constitutes at least one of the remedies for the control of anger. This is obviously implied in what we have just previously discussed, namely, the recognition of the real cause of anger. This easily constitutes most of the remedy, for when one realizes that only a man himself causes his own anger and not another, then he will have a very different idea about it. A person who recognizes the real cause of anger will show himself up. He will see himself as a mental weakling who has allowed himself to be put into a mental corner with no alternative except to snarl back like some lower animals. Since we cannot see ourselves as weak, we will tend to despise anger. We cannot cut into our own egos, and will frown upon every evidence of anger. When, therefore, an individual really sees that he himself must assume the responsibility for the cause of anger, he will regard it as his problem and not another's.

Knowing, therefore, that the cause of anger is *within* instead of *without* oneself, a person in order to save his own pride will not easily permit himself to be caught in a mental trap. Here is a place where knowledge is power. An insult, an unwarranted attack on his plans, a hampering of his activities may take place, but if he calls the responsibility for anger back upon himself, he will tend to take this affront in a manner that will guard his ego. There is too much humiliation in the process. His instinctive desire for self-preservation, which carries with it the innate desire for self-exaltation, will tend to rout anger, or prevent its rise. He may tend to resort to clever repartee and save himself. He may use his wit as a thrust. He may keep a cool head and indicate by controlled remarks that he has not been worsted. A person should, therefore, recognize the mistake of casting responsibility for anger upon another. This projection is for the most part unconscious. Its motive is probably to get rid of responsibility for our own weaknesses. We blame others for them because we cannot stand the strain of holding ourselves guilty. The individual is, therefore, constantly fighting to give himself freedom of mind by relieving himself of all tension. We like better to gnaw at another than to feel ourselves gnawed.

We see that this confusion of occasion with cause furnishes a constant obstacle to any remedy for the overcoming of anger. Naturally, if we think another is actually the *cause* of anger, then that relieves us of all responsibility for displaying it, and of overcoming it. We then regard it as inevitable when the insulting or hindering situation arises. We look upon it as something forced upon us by the law of cause and effect.

B. Autosuggestion to the Rescue

The second means to help in overcoming anger is *to keep thought in the right direction.* If an individual thinks that another is the *cause* of his anger, then there is nothing more to do but to throw the blame on him and continue his anger-habit by this justification. When we adopt this mistaken attitude of mind, it is psychologically impossible to overcome anger. Its flame mounts higher and higher. The more a person thinks of the hampering circumstances the angrier he gets, until the emotion dies away with time. It is very easy to keep our attention centered on the wrong cause when in anger. This misdirected attention feeds anger and it will brook no rival thought. It then so controls the mind and body of the victim that it monopolizes his entire being. It is tyrannical in its claim. It allows for no counteridea. Every emotion tends to preserve itself, and anger is no exception. However, this tendency to preserve an emotion is made very easy when an individual keeps his mind on the wrong thing.

But let an individual realize that *another is not the cause* but only the occasion of anger, and with this new understanding he is not inclined to feed his anger. He will not tend to nurse it. Why should he feel justified in maintaining it when it is a dead giveaway of his own mental weakness?

The more a person realizes the cause of his anger the more he can re-center his attention. We easily tend to take our minds off our own weaknesses. Hence, in anger a person who realizes its cause is ripe for excellent suggestion; he can learn to put his mind on substituting a calm or a cordial demeanor.

This right thinking precedes right behavior. But it should follow the characteristics of suggestion: holding the thought on a proper substitute-behavior unquestionably, with full attention, with a personal interest, and with no rival thought. Such a suggestion is justified because of the futility of personal anger.

It is then proper autosuggestion which may serve as a cure in overcoming anger. Let a person say, "I am foolish to allow myself to get angry. It is *my* fault and not another's, even though he provided the wrong occasion," and he should center his thinking away from the sign of his own weakness. It is surprising how much anger is nursed and prolonged by wrong thinking. Centering the attention on the substituted behavior gives it short life. *Behavior will soon follow what we are mostly thinking about.* Overcoming anger is then a matter of a proper shift of attention.

IX. OCCASION AND CAUSE WITHIN A PERSON

An interesting study of anger reveals that there is a type of person who is both the occasion and the cause of his own anger. He provides the setting as well as the trigger that ignites the charge. There is no insult from another, no slander, abuse, or interference. There is nothing reprehensible in what another says or does. All the trouble is on the inside of the angry individual.

There are two classes of people of this type: one is the individual with sluggish nerve current, and the other is the person who has a quickly responsive nerve current, but who is antisocial.

A. The Sluggish Type

In respect to the first class, the real difficulty lies principally in the quality of physique the subject inherits. His nerve is heavy and ponderous; the nerve current is slow in transmission. Nothing tragic or harmful can be ascribed to this condition unless he pushes his own nerves. Such an individual is slow in composing and expressing his thoughts. When asked a question in a hurried situation, he may not think as fast as he thinks the situation demands. He then feels confused and pressed. His nerves are crowded, and he easily feels that another is restraining him. Anger may then greet an innocent party.

But the difficulty is entirely his own. It is permissible to ask hurried questions. If an individual is unable to adjust himself to this situation *and set his own natural pace for reply*, then he is furnishing also the occasion as well as the cause for his own anger. It is his heavy mind that he himself crowds, and not the other person's insults or interference that occasions the problem.

A friend of the author's is conscientious, but phlegmatic in nature. He likes promotion work, but he constantly finds himself in situations that demand quick movements, as well as quick decisions. He tries to respond as fast as a high-strung type of person, but he does not realize that it is a futile task. He cannot copy or cultivate the speed of reaction of the easily responsive individual. His nervous system is not sufficiently pliable. The consequence is that he finds himself in a constant mental stew of irritation and anger. His nerves naturally rebel and take the demand for a hurried response as a hampering situation. It is as though an outsider were actually interfering. His day's work is always a weary job. Fatigue sets in early. He is getting weaker in body. His resistance is getting lower, and if he does not understand and control very soon both the occasion and cause of his upsets, he will have to resign his position and spend months in a rest cure.

This type of individual is not a moral problem. There is no intention to flare back at others—no dislike of their company—no antisocial attitude. But he *thinks* that others bother him. He does not grasp the idea that he gets in his *own* way—that he bothers himself.

The remedy for such an individual is first a clear understanding of himself—to see that it is his own crowded nerves that make him angry, and not the "interference" of another.

The second step is to adjust himself to his own nervous system and to follow his own natural pace "no matter whether the heavens fall," and to maintain this thought unflinchingly and without argument. The wise individual goes his own pace irrespective of the speed of others, but it often takes costly lessons to learn this fact. And even when the truth is discovered, it is necessary to reinforce it by the power of autosuggestion. When in a "tight" place, the thought of responding according to one's nervous system should never be questioned.

B. The Antisocial Individual

The person who is "agin" people is more prone to anger than one who likes his fellow men. He maintains that they interfere with his plans and do not give him a square deal. Since he thinks that society humbles him, he employs the defiance of anger to humble people.

But this deluded individual also does not realize that *he* is at fault and not society. He is also both the occasion and the cause of his own anger. His only enemy is himself.

If such an individual presents a plan before a committee and members legitimately ask him about the practicality of the scheme, he may easily fly into a range because he interprets these justified questions for information as personal antagonism. His own warped mentality converts such a situation into an interference, and feeling his convictions maligned, he will bolster his case with anger.

If he espouses a cause and seeks support for it, he resents what he believes is lack of coöperation. People are naturally indifferent and may mean nothing personal in a refusal or unconcern in lending aid, but he will engage in bitter attacks against the "perfidy" of friends.

Such a person may be a pronounced and extreme type of introvert who was unfortunately restrained during childhood. But whatever the cause of his antisocial attitude, his outbursts of anger are due to his own mind and not to the acts of others. Yet he continually and persistently projects his own feeling into others. He is like the animal that shows a fighting spirit against another beast because of an odor that comes from itself.

Sociology, ethics, and religion could present a good case against him, but he also condemns himself without knowing it. He not only falsely makes society his enemy, but he makes himself his own antagonist. His antisocial feelings do not permit him to master himself. He divides his mind with strain and tension. Life to such a man is a constant fretting and nervous instability. He does not know poise of mind, but only an upset.

The only cure for such an unfortunate mind is sociability. It is psychologically necessary that he make society his friend in order to develop *his own* mind. This plan must be unflinchingly kept before him. All argument and attempted justification for his antisocial feelings should cease, and, therefore, his only cure is a sociability which is accepted by way of suggestion. If he questions it, he ruins his chance for peace and happiness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does righteous indignation easily run out of bounds?

2. What is the technical difference between an occasion (condition) and a cause? Can you illustrate?

3. Why do you think people defend their personal anger? Can you think of reasons other than those discussed in the text?

4. Why is righteous indignation not an emotion?

5. At what stage of growth does hampering of desires occasion anger in the child?

6. Why is it easy to turn the infliction of bodily punishment into personal anger?

7. Why is personal anger a cheap compensation?

8. How prevalent are the two types of individuals discussed at the close of the chapter?

9. How does sociability promote one's own mind?

XX

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE

> *The man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder; a waif, a nothing, a no-man. Have a purpose in life, if it is only to kill and divide and sell oxen well; but have a purpose.*
>
> CARLYLE

I. PURPOSE MISUNDERSTOOD

If mental hygiene seeks to provide means to insure mental health which enables the mind to function easily without the tearing effect of friction, then the study of purpose finds a very important place in its program. Purpose is the keynote of a good mind and is to the human being what an expert manager is to a factory.

We tend to decrease the significance of purpose, however, by not fully comprehending its scope. We urge others to have purposes, or, in other words, aims, objectives, or "something to strive for." But emphasis is placed on the goal—namely on *where we are going*, instead of *how* to reach our destination. Purpose includes an objective, but by its very nature it should provide a certain *kind of functioning* of the mind. This is its principal consideration. Without having a particular place to walk we may not walk as well as if we did. Without knowing the way to the end we may not proceed very well. Without a road to a goal we may stray away. A purpose should keep our minds in line, provide good, straight efficient thinking, and prevent us from being mentally stranded.

We stress accomplishment, and this is beneficial and necessary. But in setting a goal, we are liable to keep the eye more on the goal than on the road. Since a goal is to keep us properly on the road, then being on the road proceeding in a straightforward fashion is what we are after. Psychologically speaking, an objective provides an efficient mind, and this is the ultimate end. All psychology of a practical nature seeks to put the mental machinery in proper working order. "Think right," "Control your emotions," "Get rid of mental friction," "Eliminate worry," "Have a mental schedule to prevent a waste of energy," "Don't eat up your mind with irritations," "Learn to relax"—these and many other phrases indicate that what every man and woman is striving for is *a good way of running his or her mind.*

We then face another paradox. A means is necessary to reach a goal; the road is a way to reach a destination. But from another point of view to be adopted in this present chapter, we may say that if it were not for a goal there would be no good roads. Having places of importance to reach forced our state legislatures to build good roads. So with the human mind, *objectives make good minds.* Hence, the paradox is that the end serves as a means.

Consequently, it is very easy for people to feel at times that "Anticipation is better than realization," "The pursuit is better than the pursued," "The chase offers more thrill than the quarry." These aphorisms are not always true. Accomplishment has given some people the greater thrill. But it may still be asked whether the joy of accomplishment is not principally because of the *manner* of accomplishment. If I should bungle the killing of big game in the wilds of Africa, would I be a "mighty hunter"? Would I derive much pleasure from it? If a man climbed a mountain in an unskillful manner, would he feel very ecstatic when he reached the top?

It is interesting to apply this principle of psychology to gangsters. Their pride is often not in killing a man, but in the *way* they "put him on a spot." If they bungle the killing, their regret is often over this fact and not because the victim was finally killed. If they "pull off a good job," their pride may be more because of their skill than because of the regrettable fact that a life was lost.

A man makes a speech and its effect is excellent, but if he reaches his goal by a way which to him appears clumsy, then he may not get any thrill from it. He often thrills more over his *means* of winning his audience than in winning it. We want to possess and to hold. We cannot belittle accomplishment, but the main point of the present discussion is not to belittle the *means* of accomplishment.

As we examine the human being who is trying to make the most out of life, we find that the secret of living is a certain manner of living. All the great religions of the world emphasize a certain *way* to live. To get the greatest religious experience is to live in a certain manner. So in respect to the everyday aspects of life, it is the *way* that a man goes about things that spells his happiness or unhappiness, success or failure. If he feels that he is a success, independent of the amount of money he has made, it is because his mind functions in a certain way. If he feels that he is a failure, independent of how much money he has made, then it is because his mind has not functioned properly. In other words, it is not so much what we are after, but the way we are after it. *Life is a manner of living.*

But now what of purpose? This factor provides the proper manner of living, as we shall attempt to show. Purpose, then, is not synonymous with a mere aim or some goal a person would like to reach.

II. LIFE IS SPONTANEOUS IN EXPRESSION

If purpose provides a satisfactory manner of working the human mind, then it should fit into the essential biological demands of the human organism. How should the mind and body of man act from the biological point of view?

How should our life processes function? Is the human being made to perform with friction, with the tearing effects of tension, with activity freighted with worry, anger, irritability, hatred, and restlessness as some suppose it to be? Emerson asks whether life is to be lived with gnashing of teeth. Many find themselves "with their teeth set on edge" and think that this is natural, and even when circumstances are propitious for a change in their manner of living, they do not proceed to change. They just endure, feeling that life means merely to grin and bear it.

But life processes are essentially easy and free from strain. Herrick[1] says that "normal activity within physiological limits is intrinsically pleasurable"; there is a joy of living just for its own sake. The expenditure of energy, if not burdened with fatigue, bad health, worry, and other hindering factors, is pleasurable in itself; intelligently directed activity is probably the highest type of pleasure known. Herrick says that Huxley thought that life itself possesses a spontaneity of action "and its natural expression gives rise to a primeval joy of living." Herrick goes on to say that our normal activities, joyful in themselves, are adapted to certain ends and are not random in their characteristics. He also quotes Max Eastman to the effect that we not only *react*, but we *act;* that life seeks experience; that the human organism leads itself to scientific discovery and to creative artistic genius.

Here we have the idea strongly expressed that the nervous system with its modes of expression is naturally adaptable to a free and unimpeded expression. *We naturally like to live.* We live also to certain ends. If this natural, easy, joyful expression directed toward ends is impeded, strain results, tension piles up, and the consequence is a miserable existence. Reaching for ends, and then being blocked, contradicts nature. Life is intrinsically free from strain as it goes toward its ends.

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[1] Herrick, C. Judson, *An Introduction to Neurology* (1922), pp. 287 ff.

Now then, we are ready to show the psychological place of purpose. It is in meeting this fundamental biological demand of the human organism that purpose has its place. Purpose sets an end. In setting an end it prevents random movements, provides freedom from strain, and provides the joy of spontaneous life.

Ethics and philosophy have long proclaimed the need of self-expression for the individual; "the realization of the self" has long been their favorite phrase. From a psychological angle we find that purpose, when properly used, provides a realization of the self. It is the builder of personality. This being so, then personality is a kind of action and not merely the sum total of the traits of a human being, which is only a dry, superficial bit of arithmetic applied to man. Personality is dynamic and progressive.

After this rather lengthy introduction, we are now prepared psychologically to describe purpose and its value. And when we say "psychologically,"we mean describing the way the mind works when influenced by purpose.

III. DEFINITION OF PURPOSE

Purpose may be broken down into five parts, though these are fused together in practice as a total act.

A. A Purpose Includes an Aim

Naturally, if there is a purpose, it is directed toward a certain end—not to any loose, indefinite end, but to something definite and specific. When I want to get a book from my library case, it is, of course, a certain definite volume and not just anything that comes to my mind. If I want to reach for my fountain pen to begin this chapter, I do not, of course, reach for the calendar pad. If I want to put on my shoes, I, of course, do not reach for a gunnysack. All this is very obvious when worded in this way, but it is not obvious when we speak of our purposes. An aim in purpose is a specific thing. We either want to go to New York or we don't, if we have a purpose in mind. We should know just where we want to go, or just what we want to do with a purpose.

B. A Purpose Includes a Plan

If an individual is truly to have a purpose, then he should have a technique for reaching his end. If nature provides for a spontaneous expression of ourselves toward an end and we have no plan for getting there, then there is no spontaneity of expression. It is blocked. Even a half-formed technique will kill this normal, free, joy-giving expression of ourselves. It is then no purpose.

C. A Purpose Includes a Desire

It is obvious that if I want to get a definite book from my library case, that desire emanates from my own mind. The doing of it is also prompted by myself.

D. A Purpose Includes a Lure

A very important characteristic of purpose is that the end draws us to it. There is no pressure from behind, but an appeal from the front. Purpose is like a rose in the garden. As we behold its beauty it brings us toward it. Beauty acts as a magnet. So every goal of a purpose is a magnet that draws; and it draws from a free untrammeled desire. There is no compulsion in purpose. It runs itself by its own appeal. The end acts like a cause, as Aristotle emphasized in his memorable description of causation. We need mechanical causes to reach our goal, but it is the goal itself that releases this mechanical cause.

E. A Purpose Is an Activity

Purpose is not merely looking at what we would like to do; it is not merely a plan to reach a goal; it is not merely wishing or desiring to reach a goal; it is not merely seeing something that lures and attracts—but it is all these combined in an actual activity. Purpose *is* activity directed toward a goal. Energy release has already been made toward an end in purpose. It is, hence, a certain way of acting.

IV. DO WE FOLLOW PURPOSE VERY MUCH?

Let us apply now the criteria of purpose to the average life of the individual.

Many people claim that they have certain purposes in life, and they are very sure about it. But do they meet the requirements of a purpose? They say that they want friendship, and this is one of their principal alleged purposes. But what *kind* of friendship? What do they have *in mind* by friendship? Is it just something in general that they hope to drift into? It is not defined. It is not specific. They do not know just what they want. If this is the case, then it is not purpose, and it is doubtful whether they are accomplishing very much. Herrick[2] says that normal activities are directed toward definite ends; also that intelligently directed activity, which is a purpose, is unsatisfying, unless it goes toward "some particular end." So when a person says he wants friendship, but has nothing definite in mind as to what he wants, then it is not purpose. It is only random activity or a mere desire.

Friendship, to be a "particular end," must be defined. It cannot be just "any old thing" or just vaguely in mind. If friendship is to be a purpose, the subject must have clearly in mind what friendship means to him.

All people want success. The author asks the members of his classes every year just what their main purposes are, and their replies always include success. But when they are asked just what they have in mind by success, they are often unable to say. They just want to "get up in the world."

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 288.

But in what definite way? What kind of a physician does a young man want to be in order to be considered successful? What kind of a businessman does a person want to be in order to be considered successful in business? What kind of scientist does an individual want to be in order to be considered successful? What these students have in mind is not some "particular end"—it is just a general, vague thing called "success." It is not defined or definite. Probably most people have no success-purpose, and it is thus a wonder that they even accidentally fall into success; though it is true that circumstances often "kick people upstairs," and they find themselves successful without knowing why. Some there are who know exactly how they want to act as an engineer or a businessman, but the majority of people do not have a genuine success-purpose.

A frequently alleged purpose is service to the community. But when the person declaring this is asked to define it, he often has no definite thing in mind. All that is present in thought is just an idea of being helpful—no particular end, just a hope for an end. Helpful in what way? Fervid individuals declare that they have a burning purpose to serve others, but if they do not have such a service defined in their own minds, then it is not purpose, but only a desire and random activity, with only an occasional "good hit."

Many declare that religion is a great purpose, but when they are asked to tell what religion means to them, or what place God has in their lives, they cannot say. God is only a vague generality, and so what they call a religious purpose is just a mere desire, plus random activity, with an occasional, chance rich experience.

The author has had a number of students who finally realized that they never had a single important purpose in their lives. They wanted friendship, success, to be of service in the community, to be popular, and so forth, but they finally came to the conclusion that what they had was only a desire; they were groping about in a trial-and-error process, trying to satisfy themselves. Without a definite end, a desire, even though powerful and urgent, is only groping in the dark. Without purpose, man is thus an inefficient animal, blindly reaching upward.

Individuals, if without purpose, naturally would not have a definite plan to reach a goal. Students planning to be lawyers, dentists, or physicians have a definite end in view. But in respect to many alleged purposes people have no road to reach their goal. People desiring friendship have not worked out a definite way of treating others to win friendship. People desiring popularity have not worked out a definite way to influence others to insure this popularity. People desiring success have not worked out a definite way of reaching success. They just crave it, and work in a disorganized manner. So with many other alleged purposes.

When normal activity is expressing itself in a free, untrammeled manner toward an end, it includes the means of reaching it. The hungry animal not only wants food, but seeks a way to get it. When I want a book from my library case, I include in the desire a technique of getting it. It is the goalless activities, or activities directed toward only vague ends, that do not provide means of reaching the goal. Sometimes it is difficult to find ways of attaining a goal, but until this is done, it is doubtful whether it is a purpose.

Going toward a goal with no definite way of getting there causes poor expression. Random movement is present; energy is wasted; disappointment crowds in upon one, and tension often results from being at "cross-purposes" in trying to reach the goal. To express ourselves well includes a road map as well as cities to reach.

Then there are some individuals who say that they have purposes, but at the same time feel driven toward their "goals." Naturally, these would not be purposes. Compulsion—driven behavior—is not purposive. Purpose has a spontaneity, a freedom that knows no lash of force; it is born from a feeling: "This is my act, and in my freedom I have created it."

Some alleged purposes have lost their lure. Others have died out. Inactivity has led to an explanation that "I have a purpose, but do not follow it any more." Of course this is not purpose.

When we apply our criteria, many so-called purposes have to be discarded. And if adults, as well as students, observed themselves carefully, they might find much and sometimes all of their lives purposeless.

V. NEED OF PURPOSE

A. Purpose Relieves Tension

Two major factors emerge so far from our discussion. One is that an act directed toward an end is pleasurable in itself, and is unrestrained. The second is that purpose eliminates random movements.

Herrick implies, as we have shown, that if there is an impediment to a free, unrestrained expression of energy, then nervous tension ensues, seeking relief. What is a common difficulty with people? Blocked lives! They set themselves toward goals with definite plans to reach them, and then obstacles rise to thwart them. Purposes are then destroyed—progressive activity toward a goal is stopped. This is worse than random living, for these individuals have already mustered their energies, mapped out ways to express their energies, and actually started toward their goals. A severe punishment of a human being results when activity directed toward an end is stopped. If intelligently directed activity, freely moving toward its goal, brings the highest pleasure known, then the worst experience would be to stop this activity. Tension is nature's sign that expression is suppressed. It is the most unwelcome sign. Suppression, then, is the chief psychological sin, and expression is life's salvation.

What is needed for the suppressed individual is a renewal of purposes. Physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists find a remedy for the suppressed only in keeping their energies moving toward a goal. Man is not created to live a pent-up life. Often the obstacles can be removed and the patient set going again toward his coveted goal; but often they cannot. Then the goal must be reached by a circuitous route. Society is crowded with these indirect ways of going toward a goal. If I cannot find leadership in athletics, I may find it through scholarship. If I cannot travel, I may explore the world in books. If I cannot attain success in one business, I may in another. If I cannot build a friendship with one individual, I may with another.

Purpose, therefore, is the great releaser of life. It unlocks our talents, powers, capacities, potentialities, and wants, and gives them expression. It keeps life moving. It provides goals to enable us to act well. It unburdens the tense mind. It tells us to keep our energy directed toward ends. If the way is blocked, we must try to remove the obstacles; and if this is impossible, then we must keep energy moving toward the goal in a roundabout manner. At any event, we must endeavor to keep going toward goals. This is the way to expression. This means freedom. Purpose is thus the Magna Charta of the human mind.

B. Purpose Prevents Random Movements

But many individuals are not suppressed. They have not set goals for themselves. They do not know what they want or how to get it. They are drifters in about all they do. Others are drifters only in some respects, but these might be very important.

Nature does not allow for the drifter. As we have seen, natural normal activities are directed toward certain ends. All life processes have something definite to do. The drifter is, therefore, violating nature. Idleness, with its motley throng of random movements, is not in place. Our energies are not to be frittered away, but carefully harnessed and directed. A student engaging in a field of thought without a purpose is then an idler. A man engaged in community projects without a purpose is an idler. A person seeking friendship, popularity, or success without purpose is an idler. An idler, then, is not just one who does nothing at all. He is one who may be extremely active, but without goals. His energy is wasted. His mind is going, as it were, here and there without a reason. Our greatest idlers are not those who are loafers, but those who work without purpose. They cannot know the joy of living, which is directed activity.

C. *Purpose Satisfies a Basic Urge*

If a person should ask what is the fundamental urge in man, he might receive the reply that it is an urge to activity. Some psychologists list activity as an instinct[3] or primary drive.

Since the first and most essential demand of the human being is for expression, action is the only way to bring about expression. This demand is not mainly for happiness, wealth, or position—all these come only as a result of activity, which creates happiness and wealth. The activity of the human being is the fountainhead from which all else flows; to understand this is to understand man thoroughly and truly.

Human life at its best is a running stream, not a stagnant pool. It should never stop. Action is in our own make-up, and woe be to him who interferes with the demand for expression! This truth, which psychology is today endeavoring to bring before the world, was emphasized when an old Egyptian said, "Personality is a mode of motion." He also said, "Mind expresses itself in the mode of motion, and there is nothing else." No better analysis of human nature has ever been made. The human being in his normal functioning is continually on the way. There is a continual struggle for existence, and this struggle can indicate only that there is something in him that makes such a thing necessary—his demand for action or expression.

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[3] Young, P. T., *Motivation of Behavior* (1936), p. 131.

The first evidence of this fundamental nature of human life is in the very make-up of the nerve cell, or the neuron. The neuron, which is the very foundation of life, is made up—to give a rough description—of the cell body with the two ends which we call the axon and the dendrite. This cell body is the powerhouse that furnishes the nerve current. In other words, the cell is a little dynamo within us, and there are billions of these neurons in every human body. This means that with our billions of little dynamos we are normally churning out nerve currents every second of the day and night, until old age and death stop the process. What is the purpose of a dynamo? To generate energy. But what is to be done with this energy? Is it to be pent up and not used? A dynamo that has no outlet will burn itself up. So with human beings! These little human dynamos must have an outlet. Their nerve currents must be properly employed or something very upsetting and unwelcome will happen. This is exactly what occurs when the great drives of the human beings are smothered.

But what *sort* of activity is needed? We have seen that man normally expresses himself through directed activity. But this is purpose. So the latter is the means of satisfying this basic urge of mankind. And conversely, when an individual attempts to suppress the energy that is seeking an outlet, the result is a wearing tension. Purpose thus fits into the fundamental demands of our nature. Life is not principally to dream, to feel, to think, but to *act*. Purpose is this basic urge under way.

D. Purpose Leads to Efficiency

Purpose not only relieves tension if a person is suppressed, frees him from the inanity and unsatisfying result of random behavior, and furnishes a means to provide for the right kind of activity, but it also leads to efficiency. A student may have a great deal of musical talent, but unless it is directed toward a goal of a skillful musical expression, there is no efficiency. An individual may have great promotional ability, but unless he has a carefully planned way of using this talent, he will not be efficient. A person may possess plenty of business acumen, but unless he definitely knows what he wants to do with it, there is no efficiency.

Efficiency is ability directed toward a goal, but continuously directed until skill is manifested. It is not a gift, but something created through purpose. Psychologically speaking, efficiency is directed energy based on talent. It is said that such and such an individual is efficient in this or that if he applies himself. But what is undoubtedly meant is that ability is present, but the person has no goal.

E. Purpose Organizes the Mind

Purpose is also the great organizer and coördinator of the mind. This can be seen in the statue of General Sherman in New York City, the work of the American sculptor Saint-Gaudens. As we look at this fighter, we see him sitting upon his horse, led forward by "Victory." There is no sense of waiting, but every fiber of his being is tense and set. Every muscle is in motion, his energy actually going toward his great goal. Apparently all feelings have been assembled, and converge as a mighty impulse toward the future. We see also that the thoughts of this warrior are not scattered as fragments to the wind, but are all concentrated toward the mighty aim that beckons in the future. All the forces of his being are organized into a fighting army. There are no inner struggles. There are no faint-hearted endeavors. Each aspect of his mind and heart is set toward victory; each displays the vigor and glow and enthusiasm of the conqueror. There is a united front, and "Victory" leads the way. Sherman is the great Sherman when caught up in this purpose. He is his greatest self when "Victory" leads. There is nothing more potent in all art as a symbol of purpose than this statue of General Sherman.

Let us change our picture. See an executive at his desk absorbed in a business transaction. He is not slouching in his chair; he is girded for the future; there is something worth while ahead; the glow of it attracts him; he sees something that will transform his business organization. He is caught up into an aim that draws his whole being. His whole mental life is pouring forth toward it; his whole set of pulsating feelings is pointing in that direction; his whole set of desires is converging toward one great aim. Even his body has a posture of purpose; it is an organism where muscles, fibers, tendons, and joints are coöperating in a great unity. Both his mind and his body, therefore, are organized and coördinated. Purpose, as the great centering force of life, has united the surging restless forces of this man. No one can fail to recognize in him a power that makes his future his own creation and his business a product of his own mind.

Picture the pioneer mother with a child at her side. The early West with its democracy is calling her. Sickness, danger of storms, Indian attacks, and abject loneliness beset her soul, but there is no retreat. Her mental forces are set for the future. The hardships that press upon her do not deter. Her mind keeps pointing toward her purpose. It points with all the strength and grace of a smoothly running stream, though it is besieged by the rough banks and obstacles that seek to hamper its progress. Every muscle answers the call of the pioneer. Every feeling makes her more devoted to her purpose. Every desire and sentiment answers the summons. Her whole being vibrates with a determination to go forward. She faces the future as though she has but one idea, one plan, one feeling, one desire, and one emotion—a united, thrilling personality.

The boy at college, with nothing special to work for, drags through a year or two with a disunited mind. There is no joy in his work; there is no system to it; he wonders why people find any enjoyment in going to college. But he suddenly discovers that he would like to be a physician and realizes that a college course is a needed preparation. He is transformed overnight; he no longer questions and doubts everything. Settled convictions take the place of a mere jumble of thoughts and feelings. The forces of his being have been brought together, and what a change! Something now is ahead of him that is more than a mere plan—it is a purpose. It takes in his whole nature. His grades jump many points; his recitations in class take on a new character; there is a certain alert enthusiasm as he prepares and recites his lessons. Teachers, friends, and parents notice that there is a new personality in place of the old. The transforming force is a purpose.

A wife is careless and shiftless; she does not ally herself with any worth-while movement in the community; she is a mere drifter without a serious thought in her head; she engages in no serious conversation with anyone. No one asks her advice; no one gives her any responsibility in performing a task; no one dares to rely upon her. But see what a transformation motherhood has made in her! We fail to understand the cause of this tremendous change unless we realize that she is now transformed by the renewing and uniting power of purpose. It is not merely that she is the physical possessor of a child, but the future is very different from what it was before. It is not a mere emptiness; her child is to grow up; she has great plans for it; she has set for herself a purpose, and she has gathered together the forces of her mind and heart and made them into a strong current that sets for the future; she must do her best thinking, hold the best feeling, and engage in her best action for the sake of her child. It is a working goal, not a mere idea, that has remade her.

Purpose, too, will transform the cynical and cruel husband. Before he forms a purpose, he finds that there is nothing to labor for; he does not think enough of his home to make of his work a purpose instead of a mere job. He sees no hope of higher wages; he sees no hope of promotion; he merely plods along day by day; life means nothing to him but drudgery and hardship; it is merely something to be criticized; he is a grouch and "hard-boiled." But entering into fatherhood immediately transforms his outer life as well as his own inner self. Life now has a meaning that is absorbing. The mere job now has a purpose; a day's work has a working goal. The forces of his mind are directed toward providing the proper sort of living for his wife and child. These examples are obvious to all of us, but they serve as easy illustrations for the psychological meaning of purpose, for they show its transforming and uniting power.

VI. CLASSIFICATIONS OF PURPOSES

Objectives may be put into three groups: (1) master purposes; (2) major purposes; and (3) subordinate purposes.

The highest order is the master purpose, which by its very name indicates that it is large enough to envelop a person's entire mind. It is the all-inclusive aim. A woman who looks upon motherhood as her objective makes virtually everything fit into this goal. Her care of her children naturally fits into it. But about everything else revolves about this pivot. She follows religion so that it will make her a better mother. She edifies her mind by reading to make her a better mother. She joins clubs to make her community-minded to make her a better mother. She takes trips for relaxation to make her a better mother. And so for her entire program. She is constantly mother-conscious, and everything she does of any consequence is to help her in the job of rearing children. If music is a master purpose, it absorbs the person's entire being. The kind of exercise he undergoes is to help him perform better. Even the vacation spot he chooses is to provide proper atmosphere so he may properly compose.

From our discussion it is readily seen that if purpose organizes the mind and gives it proper expression, then a master purpose—granting a suitability to the individual's talents—puts the entire mind in a splendid running condition. The frittering away of energy is eliminated. The disjointed and contradictory working of its various forces is prevented. All factors are united in a federation of the mind, as it were, and "in union there is strength." The most powerful and most efficient mind is, therefore, one caught under the synthesizing power of a master purpose. All the energies are then focused at white heat toward a common goal. It is going in one and not in many directions.

But there are few people with master purposes. A few women are all mothers and nothing else; a few statesmen are statesmen and nothing else; but the vast majority of people have a few major purposes, or none at all, and a host of little ones.

It is sometimes asked what a master purpose is. It is anything that absorbs a man's mind. His vocation, religion, avocation, or business can be master purposes. It would be interesting to make a survey and see what things have entirely absorbed people's energy for years. The list would be long and would include some very odd items.

A major purpose takes in only a major slice of a person's life. A young lady may be a musician, but she may think and practice music for only a portion of her time. So a man in business, in salesmanship, teaching, and many other fields. The mind is thus divided into several interests, and no one interest absorbs it one hundred per cent.

Naturally, if one has no master purpose, the next best thing is a major purpose. The bigger the portion of one's life that is purposive, the better the mind functions. Many loose ends are then brought together. Integration and smooth functioning as standards for the mind are realized to a great extent in major purposes. But, as we said, portions of the mind working in integration are not as powerful in effect as a total union. Of course, the mind works as a unit in whatever we do, but the unitary attention may be only in the interest of a part and not for the whole. The more one works for the whole mind in promoting friendship, for instance, rather than for a part, the more benefit he will receive.

The list of major purposes could be very long. Even the religion of the great majority must compete with other interests. The greatest values of life are seldom mentally all-embracing. Even a good musician may be putting only a part of his mind on his work; but a total absorption may make him a virtuoso.

Subordinate purposes are obviously those minor ones followed only temporarily. I may want a steak for dinner tonight, or want to read a certain book, but the purpose is soon fulfilled. The day's program is full of minor purposes that come and go; but the master purpose, and even some major purposes, may be lifelong.

VII. THE FAILURE OF PURPOSE

There is always some failure in respect to purpose. Four kinds of failure may be mentioned.

The first is the unsuitability of a purpose to the make-up of an individual. A young man may propose to be an engineer and even prepare for engineering, but he is not sufficiently meticulous or even accurate in details to be a successful one. An introvert may want to be a personnel manager requiring much open and free contact with people, but his introversion makes this demand very difficult to meet. Another person may prepare for general medicine, but his talents lie in the direction of research. However, strictly speaking, these people are not following a purpose, for they are not accomplishing or moving toward their goal. All they have is a mere aim—and activity directed toward an end is not present. It is blocked to begin with for lack of talent. So in this regard there has been no failure. There is nothing in which they can fail.

In the second place, many individuals actually have a goal and thereby have a purpose, but circumstances prevent them from attaining it. A boy wants to go to college, but he must stay home and work to help support the family. A man is building up a big sales force of a firm, but bad health compels him to resign and go away for a rest. Another is thriving in business, but a flood, tornado, or fire destroys his plant, and because he has insufficient insurance, he cannot resume it.

The third kind of failure occurs when purpose is criminal in nature and against the welfare of society, which sooner or later opposes and stops it. A criminal purpose, while it may have the benefit of keeping a mind active and alert and free from idleness, so contradicts the social demands of an individual that it in the last analysis suppresses the individual and doesn't really act as a genuine purpose. A purpose to be such, especially a major one, must give a free expression of the mind. Hence it is doubtful whether criminality or any bad conduct can ever be a purpose. It is probably only an attempt at one.

However, there is a fourth kind of failure of purpose which does not grow out of a lack of talent in a certain direction, is not due to thwarting, nor to a criminal aim. What is it? Virtually everyone complains of the uncertainty of purpose. It is here today and gone tomorrow—great and glorious purposes as well as little and insignificant ones. Who has not set a big aim for himself, moved toward it with freedom and creativeness, started on the way with an almost ecstatic enthusiasm, and then found in an incredibly short time that it has eluded his grasp? It is not because of a lack of sincerity, determination, or wise planning. All three are present in high degree. Circumstances are also apparently favorable. Everything is in readiness—the person and the environment—but the purposive activity just seems to stop of its own accord as though some hidden force had stopped it. Our eagerness is still present even when the purpose fails. There may even be a yearning for the new, for adventure, for the inspiring, and yet we suddenly find ourselves with no purpose. Every psychologist has been besieged by those who want to find something better ahead. They feel the need and want of it. They eagerly listen to the psychologist's advice to adopt purpose, to improve in personality and the art of living. Yet it turns out to be nothing more than empty and disillusioning idealism. These people earnestly try this and that program of purpose, but they return to the adviser dejected and wonder whether they have been chasing a will-o'-the-wisp.

One young man goes to college with a high purpose. An education is tremendously appealing. It is thought to be worth a supreme sacrifice, and the purpose envelops the youth's entire being. He pursues his studies with the glow of a crusader—but soon enthusiasm wanes, purposive activity drags out to nothing, and college life degenerates into routine, or a thank-God-for-the-last-examination attitude.

A man enters an organization with remarkable feeling. It is the newest and best thing in his life. His entire mentality is suffused with ardor for the new interest. Friends remark about the new recruit and are delighted with the addition of such an enthusiastic member—but his fire soon dies down and he settles into the cut-and-dried life of the old members.

A romance starts as every romance does. All the world enters into the joy of the lovers. The engagement is announced and is celebrated happily by comrades. The wedding day is the height of bliss. The union is blessed, and congratulations are hearty and sincere. But—in a few years, love has settled into a bare existence. The all-inclusive and dominating purpose for the home soon fades into a dullness.

Just as our big purposes fade, so our little ones do. We are constantly going from one one-day plan to another. What we do today with gladness is void when tomorrow comes. The little purposes stay with us no longer than the most inclusive ones—and sometimes not as long.

What is wrong? Is it ourselves? We do not always think so, for we follow purposes wisely and are well prepared. Is there something fundamentally wrong with purposive activity itself? It so appears. Here then is our dilemma. We advocate free activity as the greatest need of the individual. We advocate purpose as the type of activity that will fill this need; yet the very remedy we advocate is illusory. The very thing that is supposed to stabilize our lives is too ephemeral and disappointing. Is psychology therefore holding before us only a fanciful remedy? How can we build on purpose when it crumbles away?

Our reply may appear strange. Purposes in their very nature are temporal. All purposes must and should fade away. If a rose should last forever, it would lose its beauty. So with purpose. If it should last on and on from day to day and from year to year, it would no longer be a purpose. A purpose should be fresh, and therefore it never is a permanent possession. It is not made to stay.

Purpose is a temporary creation; it is a part of art. The artist never stops with one product, for when one piece has served its period of creativeness in the life of the artist, it then gives way to another. No artist ever stops creating, or he would not be an artist. We never think of a painter bemoaning the completion of a painting, or a change while painting it. Going on to new productions is a part of all art. A purpose as a part of art is thus only a temporary creative phase in the life of the individual.

But we do not desire to discuss the philosophy of art in respect to purpose. We are concerned only with the psychology of purpose. Why, then, from a psychological standpoint, should a purpose be ephemeral? Because the very pursuit of a purpose wears it out. We set up a goal; we follow it with purposive activity; but we hold the *same* thoughts regarding it, the *same* ideals, the *same* enthusiasm, and follow with the *same* kind of activity in respect to it. Here is the cause of the fading value of purpose. What is the result of pursuing the same thoughts and activities in respect to a purpose? There is but one answer. A habit! Repetition makes for habit and when habit sets in, routine has taken the place of the previous purpose. This is the inevitable consequence of the pursuit of a purpose, whether big or little. We want and need purpose, but we kill the very thing we need. When we think we are on the road to a goal, we find no goal there. The very fundamental remedy for ourselves is followed one day, but we do not find it the next.

VIII. THE CHALLENGE OF PURPOSE

But if purpose fails by its very use, then this kind of failure is not due to crushing circumstances or wrong attitudes, and there is no need of incurring heartfelt disappointments. This wearing out of purpose should serve as a challenge to view purpose in the right light. "Giving up the game" for these reasons means that the individual has not understood purposive activity; he has become unnecessarily discouraged because he thinks that pursuit of a goal is not worth the trouble or that living is a gigantic deception.

This inevitable failure is indicative of the fact that life intrinsically is a process of constant renewal, and purposes are no exception. This kind of failure is not a punishment of nature, but serves to shake us out of misunderstanding and prod us to renew our efforts. In order to live we must constantly go on to new processes. James[4] (and others previously mentioned) describes the mind as a "stream of consciousness." This being so, life, if rightfully understood, carries us on to new scenery and points of view. This fading out of purpose by its own wonderful service should then make us constantly find "new worlds to conquer." Goethe says:

> Long is the calm brain active in creation,
> Time only strengthens the fine fermentation.

Purpose may be renewed in two ways: first, by *renewing* the *contents* of a master or major purpose; and second, by renewing a purpose *entirely*—outline and content.

But are we prepared to say that the all-inclusive life purposes do not and should not remain? Does not a mother's purpose to rear her children in the best possible manner remain a permanent possession? Does not a patriot's love of his country always remain an inspiring purpose? Granted that many of our minor and subordinate purposes should be constantly renewed, should not we make an exception to our master purposes?

But *contents* of purposes change even though their general skeletons remain the same. We have spoken of the student losing his purpose. Granting that securing a college education is a master or major purpose, we see that he is trying to maintain something that can't last. His changing mind makes its content wear out. In his freshman year he brings with him certain ideas of education, but as he goes from class to class, he sidetracks these for others. He changes his whole mental pattern, but he often does not change his original purpose of an education, and then he wonders why his enthusiasm is lost. Instead of changing his purpose by working out new ways of obtaining an education, he ascribes his failure to the failure of the university.

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[4] James, William, *Psychology, Briefer Course* (1892), Chap. XI.

Many times the mind does not easily change in a situation. Yet the mind must change if the individual is to maintain purposes. New material must be put into the old pattern. One person joins an organization, for instance, but he doesn't change his mind about its policy, ideals, or spirit. The purpose in joining is not then renewed. There is nothing to do but drift along with a dead purpose. A man may even boast about being a member of an organization for fifty years, yet he hasn't mentally progressed one iota in respect to it.

Romance is wrecked because a couple does not grow mentally in the art of love. They endeavor to adhere to their first ideas, which of necessity become stale, and purpose is squeezed out of them by constant use. Home romance then fades into an ugly blur.

A man in a profession becomes tired of his work because he does not keep up with the times and merely draws from his first stock of knowledge. But naturally a purpose employing such ideas soon goes by the board because of the principle of use. Why shouldn't the professional man lose heart if his mind is uncreative? No first purpose can endure.

Friendship goes on the rocks because neither person involved endeavors to reveal something new and different to the other. They draw only upon their first store of feelings and common ideas; but these soon lose their sparkle by being constantly employed. Their first purposes spend themselves and their uncreative minds do not supply others.

A mother wants to rear her child to be an excellent citizen, but this purpose will turn cold unless she finds new ways of training her child.

No matter where we turn, purpose wanes by repetition, and a monotonous existence follows if an individual fails to refresh his mind with new ideas. We see that it is not necessary for a purpose to change in its *general* lines. A person may always desire a comprehensive education, a happy romance, a successful profession, inspiring friendships, a happy home; but he should always renew the purpose by continually seeking a new kind of content for these mental frames. The elements *within* a general permanent purpose must continually change if we wish to avoid living on nothing but the ashes of the mind.

But there are purposes whose content cannot wisely be renewed, or their outlines continually refilled. Certain purposes must be completely scrapped, for they are a total loss. One person should give up a certain sectarian belief entirely if it is all wrong; another should substitute an entirely new brand of philosophy for his old if the latter is faulty; another may have to drop all attempts to renew a friendship with certain people. In some cases a purpose proves to be entirely inadequate, frame and all, and it must go by the board.

IX. THE CREATING OF PURPOSES

But how can we continually find new purposes either in content or in both content and framework? We can't just pick up a brand-new purpose arbitrarily and renew it by a turn of the hand. Our hearts must be in it; there must be a lure and a freedom about it. No one can force us to renew our purposes. There is no such thing as forced creativeness. How then can we joyously and freely find new goals to attract us? This is a great puzzle to many. The ephemeral character of purposes may be readily recognized, but "Where can I find the thing I want?" is a constant question. Many are already searching to inject a little life into their minds through invigorating purposes. But they seek as for the "Philosopher's Stone," or the "Elixir of Youth." Furthermore, many are chasing a motley, disconnected, contradictory, and discordant mass of subordinate purposes that keep their lives in a conflict—nothing in the way of a mental magnet that reconstitutes and unifies their minds.

There is only one way a person can find a master or any kind of purpose, and that is by exploration and experimentation. People are constantly seeking "something to work for" as though it were a thing to discover in a nook or corner, or a thing already made up and wrapped in a package if only we could find it. But purposes are not *found;* they are created, and created right from the mind and heart of the individual. But here we are met with another difficulty. We do not know beforehand what to create. We have no sketch of it in our minds. The only thing present is a yearning to kill our monotony and break through the shell of dull routine.

Consequently, we are like the prospector who wants gold but does not know where to find it. But we are impelled to be mental explorers. We must be on the search to furnish ourselves with great purposes. We will never know what we would like as a purpose unless we keep on trying out new interests. We must strike off from the "trodden clod" and get into new territory. The progressive individual is not only willing to "try anything once," but he tries *everything* once that appears promising, worth while, and within his grasp. All new ideas and methods are not "antagonistic foreigners" to him, but possibilities of finding more life and progress. New experiences are not "for the other fellow"; they are continually his meat and drink.

The average individual adheres, for instance, to a certain type of reading. Will he read other types? Practically not at all. He closes his mind to them and does not even know what they mean. Who knows but that he might find something in these neglected and perhaps even scorned fields of thought that might transform his whole life?

X. THE ASSUMPTION OF A PURPOSE

Individuals abound who are not sure as to what to do, whether to adopt a purpose in this direction or in this or that organization. They are not sure because of serious doubt. They are not convinced that a certain course would be beneficial or whether they really want to follow it. They are constantly wavering, and waiting for more evidence. They are "on the fence," hoping that someone will enlighten them or give them a shove in the right direction.

But there are occasions when it is impossible to get all the evidence. In such cases, James[5] says that a decision, though arbitrary, must be made to break the mental deadlock. This kind of decision often means that the person must *assume* a purpose.

Students often do not know whether to study medicine, architecture, or engineering. They are drawn to one, then the other, but without sufficient impetus to choose definitely. They know about as much of these fields as youth can know, and yet they postpone and postpone. The best way out is to have him select a field, say medicine, and assume it as a purpose, and study and prepare *as if* he were going to be a physician. A clear, definite conclusion is soon made. Why? Because there has been a proxy-practice of the field. The mind has been set in this direction. Talent and energy have been directed to this end. *The mind has assumed a purposive behavior and while in this state actually gives a definite answer.* It is only in the actual functioning of the mind in a certain direction that a person can say whether he likes it or not. Feeling always follows action. No man can know positively whether or not he likes a certain course until he works his mind in that direction. He cannot do it by mere thought or wish. Even persons who think that they would like a certain vocation sometimes find that they do not when their minds begin to function in the vocation. Any student can tell in a short time after starting a pre-medic course whether he is suitable to medicine or will care for it. Assuming a purpose gives a person a definite answer. It is the common-sense method of trying it out; it must not be done with a reluctant mind, but with a free abandonment to the assumed goal. It saves time, energy, and peace of mind.

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

An individual is not sure of participating in a community enterprise. He is attracted to this or that organization and would like to be an active member, but he is not sure. He, too, waits and waits so long that often he finally gives up participation as too much of a problem. But here his course also should be to try out an organization by assuming a purpose toward it. He will then soon know whether he likes it or not. Harm comes to the mind through constant indecision. It breeds more indecision in other respects. Assuming a purpose frees the mind from this sort of tension and puts it in good running form and often brings to the individual a new-found joy.

The most important aspect where purpose is not forthcoming because of doubt and lack of evidence is in regard to a philosophy of life. Many people would like to believe in a certain all-inclusive view, in an immortality of the soul, in a divine constitution of the universe, or in a certain general attitude, or a certain way to live, but again they are not sure of their ground. They waver and hesitate until they give up trying to believe in any general meaning of existence, and drift on to the end of their days puttering around with details.

But if it is beneficial to assume a vocational purpose, it is also beneficial to assume a philosophical purpose. Doubts will never be allayed sufficiently to make one sure of *any* ultimate conception of life. All the evidence cannot be gathered. James[6] urges a "will to believe" in this situation; he says that the individual should adopt the best and most optimistic view. Here faith is the only guide. It is only a plunge in the uncertain future, and the years ahead are a closed book. But James presents a philosophical defense of this faith. It is better than no faith and makes of the mind an optimistic adventurer. We must make a choice, so why not the best one?

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[6] James, William, *Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1912).

But we should give this kind of faith a psychological defense. Doubts are allayed by assuming a belief. The indecisions of the mind are eradicated. The waste of energy in merely drifting through life is stopped. The mind is caught up in a purpose—a purpose that could serve as a master objective. This faith puts the mind in a good functioning order and provides the thrill and joy of living. It provides the best *way* to live, even though it is assumed. Since purpose is the essence of living, it provides the individual with the best means to bring forth a well-rounded development of mind. His whole program is organized around this mighty objective. Mental integration and harmony are present—the keystones in the building of a mind. A good way of running the mind will develop it even with an assumed purpose. Faith that leads us to a broad conception of the meaning of life sets our mental house in order, and it, therefore, psychologically as well as philosophically, justifies itself. Dubois has in mind the benefit of an assumed purpose, whether a major one or a master conception of the universe, when he says, "It matters little what banner we raise, provided we hold it high," although he naturally assumes that the individual will carry a banner that to him appears the very best one to carry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In how many serious respects does the layman misunderstand purpose?
2. Why does purpose lead to excellent expression?
3. How do you think a goal can act as a stimulus and release our energy?
4. Is an act initiated from merely a mechanical cause as powerful as an act released from a final cause or goal?
5. Why should a person assume a good purpose if an occasion demands it?
6. Why does loyalty to a cause illustrate the transforming power of purpose?

7. Can bad behavior be a purpose in the strict meaning of the term?
8. What is the best way to form new purposes?
9. Name as many fields as you can which may become master purposes.
10. Why is the fading out of purposes a challenge?

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XXI

THE MAN IN THE CROWD

Prejudices, friend, govern the vulgar crowd.
VOLTAIRE

I. INTRODUCTION

We have been discussing mental hygiene problems of the individual and endeavoring to present psychological aids to help him meet his personal difficulties.

However, many will say that when alone they conduct themselves without being bothered with too many personal problems, but when they are in a crowd their conduct is often quite regrettable and even at times shameful. Individual control appears to give way to social disruption.

It may be well, therefore, to devote a final chapter to an explanation of the individual's behavior in a crowd. Problems in a group might be nothing more than personal problems carried over.

II. THE MEANING OF A CROWD

The first necessity in discussing a crowd is to define it more or less, and classify it in respect to other assemblies. Groups may be roughly divided into five classes. The chief characteristic of all groups is the degree of reasoning present, or, in other words, the degree of feeling present. According to this criterion, the five groups can be arranged in such an order that the group with the least feeling but with the greatest reason is placed first, and the others follow as feeling in them increases. In Figure 21, the decrescendo sign shows a decrease in reason, and the crescendo sign shows an increase in feeling.

Other groups could be included in the list, but the present one is inclusive enough to show that a crowd is a special kind of a group in which feeling or emotion is stronger than reasoning but has more control of itself than the mob.

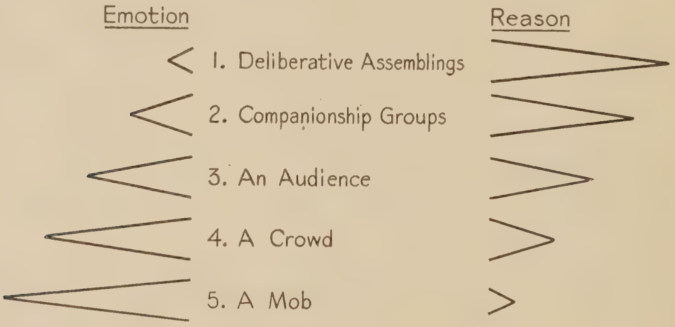

Figure 21.

However, a crowd can turn into a mob. In fact, each one of the first four can merge into the following.

Naturally a crowd is emotional. It is a mass of people gathered in the same place, and impulse is uppermost. Reason has little part. The minds of the people are wide open to suggestion. There is always an unruly spirit in a crowd; there is also a certain disorder or an inclination toward it. A few persons standing looking into a store window or waiting quietly on a street corner cannot rightly be called a crowd. They are unaggressive, orderly gatherings. A crowd, on the other hand, is always aggressive. A crowd is also always a unit, whereas in an unaggressive gathering the members feel an individual isolation. A crowd is a state of mind and not a mere huddling together of bodies. Groups at baseball, football, and basketball games, at prize fights, wrestling matches, and circuses, are crowds. Many political gatherings are crowds, as in England, especially in the famous Hyde Park, where any speaker can mount a soapbox and unburden his mind. Most outdoor political meetings are crowds, and it takes greater generalship to control them than an audience with greater emotional poise.

III. WHAT MAKES A CROWD EMOTIONAL?

A. Physical Jostling

The cause of emotion in a crowd is a little difficult to ascertain. It might be from one or several sources.

Certainly one of the causes is the jostling of one person against another. It is no mere empty convention that people in an audience are discreetly separated from one another. The chairs are so arranged that there is a comfortable space between them, enabling the members to sit without touching one another. If elbows meet they do so slightly. Even church members in a pew do not want to sit very close to one another. This is made evident by the dislike expressed when ushers in a church put too many in a seat for personal comfort. It is interesting to note that when the seat is crowded, people tend to lose a little of their dignity, and it is difficult to feel religious in such a situation. Church pews should not be crowded if the proper spirit of worship is to be maintained.

When we consider the deliberative assemblies, such as legislative bodies and courts, we find the seats further apart than in a theater or hall. We can say that as the dignity of the group rises, seats are more and more widely separated. There is a direct ratio between dignity and the space between seats. Lack of dignity is consonant with little space. The House of Representatives of the United States has no separate chairs for all of its members, and we also know that its dignity is not quite commensurate with that of the Senate, where each Senator is discreetly separated from his colleague. In the hall of the League of Nations, the wide space between the seats is quite in keeping with the dignity of the gathering. Poise and control are also in order in court. Judges, therefore, sit far apart.

But when we come to a crowd, people sit or stand very close to one another. They pack themselves in, for instance, at football and baseball games, and wrestling matches. This packing together appears to be necessary to create the crowd spirit, for the members do not feel a solidarity unless they bunch together. Often the speaker before a crowd urges the separated members to huddle together with the others.

Here we see a close relation between a lack of dignity and closeness of physical contact. Evidently people come already primed to bunch together in a crowd in spite of the fact that some sit or stand separately; but the latter do not feel themselves a part of the mental life of the group and will not until they close the space separating them from others. A crowd by its very nature is more or less of a disordered group, and this expectancy is met by the members touching elbows and rubbing shoulders. It is doubtful whether a group could become a crowd if each member were in a separate stall with just his head sticking out listening to a leader.

When bodies are in very close proximity, the situation is very conducive to emotion. It is strange that butting against my elbow and rubbing against my shoulder will tend to the loss of my dignity! How easily one becomes irritated, annoyed, or emotional in a mauling group! In watching a football game, pushing and jamming against one another make it easy to lose dignity. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why college presidents sit in their boxes at a football game with seats discreetly separated. They may feel democratic enough to sit in the crowd, but it would not be as dignified. Even the most stiff-collared individual might become emotional in the crowd.

Why this continual jostling against one another in the crowd tends to the loss of dignity is not known. It might confirm the James-Lange theory of the origin of emotion, namely, that it is first a bodily disturbance, and only later a mental disturbance. We know that in dramatics if there is bodily jostling, emotion is generated with its tinge of wildness. It may be that the rough action in a crowd which leads to a rough emotion is easily explained according to James's famous theory that we are frightened because we *run* from a bear.

B. *Basic Convictions Aroused*

Undoubtedly another cause for the emotions shown by a crowd is that the speaker or leader always tends to arouse convictions that are so basic that, when stirred, they are always accompanied by an emotion. This is done also in an audience, or in Senate chambers, but perhaps the seat separation here prevents emotions from developing very far, especially if members are sitting far enough apart. Yet in spite of this seat separation, a moving oration might turn even the Senate into a crowd.

A politician speaking to a group makes a deliberate and determined effort to stir profound convictions. He aims at a heightened expression of an emotion in his hearers, more so than he does before a dignified audience. He appeals to their patriotism in discussing war, to their love of individual liberty in criticizing the autocratic policies of the government, to their right of pursuit of happiness in discussing social unjustices, and so forth. These deep-lying convictions bring to the surface the deep fervor of emotion.

C. *Multiplied and Concerted Stimuli*

Another probable cause of an emotion in a crowd is the multiplicity of stimuli. All the members are polarized toward the speaker or leader. All faces are turned in his direction. They all bear strong signs of feeling. Not one but many elbows are touching. Not one but many shoulders are rubbing against one another. All may be singing together. All may be swaying to a common rhythm. All may be marching in common step. All see to it that they are affected by this storm of stimuli. This community of action joined to a primed condition for emotion easily generates an emotion, and often turns it into a frenzy. Community of action arouses feeling even in a group whose members are spatially separated from one another; but start a crowd with people closely packed together in concerted action with each person seeing everybody else stimulated, and the fervor of emotion is an assured outcome.

IV. SUGGESTION IN A CROWD

It is not our purpose primarily to discuss the causes of the emotion in a crowd, but to show how emotion is related to suggestion. As we have previously indicated, emotion and reason are not commensurate. They cannot very well exist together. The nervous system is too upset for a person to be very deliberative or careful in his thinking when he is emotionally aroused. Reasoning requires a calm mind, and that is the psychological explanation why assemblies requiring dignified and careful consideration of problems force their members to be personally separated from one another. Because reason is greatly subordinate to emotion in a crowd, its members are very suggestible. Ideas flit into the mind and find a place without being criticized one way or the other. People then are not reasoning humans but are suggestible animals in a crowd.

All kinds of ideas filter into the crowd mind. Some are good, but many are bad. They tend to be accepted just on their face value, as though a member as an individual had no reasoning ability of his own. There is a very good reason why exponents of causes want to present their issues before crowds. They know that it is easy to persuade many to follow their banner because of suggestion. It is a quick means of gaining converts. If the cause is good, it is well for people to gather in a crowd and hear it discussed, for then their hindering alibis and excuses would not stand in the way of declaring a loyalty to it. Many people even plan to stay away from a crowd to prevent a devotion to an intelligent cause. They know the power of suggestion in a crowd, and their laziness, indifference, cynicism, introversion, or whatnot keeps them from joining and taking part in a worthy program. If a cause is not a worthy one, it is dangerous for any man to be caught in a crowd hearing it discussed. Suggestion, being very contagious, might ensnare him.

Examples of social suggestion are numerous. A group gathers in a cabin for fishing and camping. All is orderly until someone suggests that a certain member be initiated into the "fraternity of married men," having lately led a bride to the altar. The idea is picked up impulsively without thought, and as one and another proposal is made, it is carried out with alacrity. It is first suggested that he make a speech, and immediately all join in urging the "victim" to declaim. He is next asked to sing, and again all press for a song. It is proposed that he dance, so he attempts a few steps. A rail is next suggested. He is to ride it. There is not a single dissent. To decorate the candidate he is tagged with rag streamers and feathers, and to top the celebration a few daubs of tar are smeared on his face. Around and around they ride him on the rail as the group hilariously shouts. But the candidate's face has lost its smile and is hardened with disgust. A few minutes after it is over, the members profusely apologize and feel that they were foolishly drawn into the pranks without using their reason. The crowd spirit had seized them and reason was in abeyance. Further suggestion might have turned the group into a mob with probable injurious effect on the candidate.

At the age of twelve the author witnessed a revival which made an indelible impression upon him. About half the audience was composed of persons of the uneducated class, and about half of the cultural and prominent people in the community. The meeting opened with five or six Methodist hymns, which thoroughly stirred the group. The minister delivered a forty-five minute exhortation on sin and damnation, and dwelt in no uncertain terms on the punishment of literal hell-fire and brimstone for those who had not yet repented of their evil ways. During the last fifteen minutes of his discourse he ranted, pitched his voice in a high key and uttered his sentences in a continuous lilting and rhythmic manner, rising gradually to an outburst like a siren whistle. The listening was intense and highly sustained.

After the fear-engendering sermon, several more hymns were sung with a very pronounced rhythm. Then an invitation was given for the sinners to come to the altar and seek repentance. During the singing a man rushed to the front of the church and prayed in an agonized voice. After a minute or two he arose, shouting "Hallelujah," and went among the pews to continue his exaltations. Soon several followed him to the altar, and then church members gathered around them to offer assistance in prayer. Another hymn was spontaneously started by a member of the congregation. Later, a woman arose and began a procession of the members, who sang and shouted "Glory Hallelujah" as they went. Sedate men and women who never were known to be emotional arose and joined in the shouting—the educated and the uneducated. Some swooned in their seats. Others were praying in little groups over the audience, and the altar was crowded with converts. Religious frenzy and excitement were rife. Dignity was thrown aside, and many were bordering on hysteria. It was with extreme difficulty that the group composed itself and left the church.

This was a typical crowd where the audience-type of mind with its order and dignity gave place to the emotion of a revival. The explanation for this phenomenon is social suggestion.

Examples of secular crowds abound. An American newspaper gives the following account of women as they gathered to hear the great Polish pianist, Paderewski:

> There is a chatter, a rustling of programs, a waving of fans, a nodding of feathers, a general air of expectancy, and the lights are lowered. A hush. All eyes are turned to a small door leading to the stage; it is opened. Paderewski enters. . . . A storm of applause greets him . . . but after it comes a tremulous hush and a prolonged sigh . . . created by the long, deep inhalation of upwards of three thousand women. . . . Paderewski is at the piano. . . . Thousands of eyes watch every commonplace movement [of his] through operaglasses with an intensity painful to observe. He, the idol, they the idolators. . . . Toward the end of the performance the most decorous women seem to abandon themselves to the influence. . . . There are sighs, sobs, the tight clinchings of the palms, the bowing of the head. Fervid exclamations of "He is my master" are heard in the feminine mob.

Heinrich von Sybel,[1] in speaking of the First Crusade, says:

> We can hardly understand such a state of mind. It was much as if a large army were now to embark in balloons, in order to conquer an island between the earth and the moon, which was also expected to contain the paradise. Swarms of men of different races, with their wives and daughters, with infants taken from the cradle, and grandsires on the verge of the grave, and many sick and dying, came from every direction, all of them ready to be led to the conquest of the Holy Land. Peter the Hermit, Walter the Penniless, and Gottschalk became the heroes, the ringleaders of the mobs, which were cut to pieces before they reached Palestine. Then followed an army led by pilgrim princes, who succeeded in conquering the Holy Land, and founded there a Christian kingdom; but this kingdom was unstable, and it fell again and again into the hands of the unbelievers, and crusade after crusade was organized, each being a weaker copy of the preceding, until 1272, when the crusade epidemic was completely at an end.

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[1] Sybel, Heinrich von, *Geschichte des ersten Kreuzzugs* (2nd ed., Leipzig, 1881).

V. THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTNESS OF MEMBERS OF A CROWD

One of the very prominent qualities of a crowd is the sense of being *firmly* on the right[2] side of an issue—no matter what it may be. Some are not carried away while in a crowd. They are probably just "hangers-on" and refuse to be caught up in the spirit of the occasion, but they are always in a decided minority. Most of the members are fused in the crowd spirit and experience its unity. When this is so, there is a feeling of a powerful force of being in the right.

A baseball group worked up over a decision of the umpire will feel the spirit of a martyr in fighting for certain "rights" which might later turn out to be false. The crowd in support of a home football team will harbor a strong and dangerous sense of injustice if the opposing side should only *apparently* employ wrong tactics. How wrong the latter seems, and how right their advocacy appears! A political crowd may feel one hundred per cent right as they agree with the speaker in denouncing an opposing candidate. It is natural for the phrase to have originated, "My country right or wrong." The country's enemy is wholly wrong. Crowd spirit in a time of war "makes" it so. Emotion makes people sure. Crowds at a time of war feel a heavenly sanctity in their convictions, while the convictions of the enemy are thought to be wholly born from the pit of hell. A person always feels more right in a crowd than when alone. A cause requiring fervor and strong conviction could not be promoted except through crowds.

Why there is this sense of absolute rightness in a crowd is a question. It might be from the virtually unrestrained expression in the crowd. Grudges, prejudices, and hatreds burst out of their hiding places, and are given almost a full exhibition. The "lid is off" and the individual opens the throttle. Only a mob spirit would display a more unrestrained emotion. If hatred is not expressed, then enthusiasm, patriotism, joy, loyalty, and other positive qualities are given free expression. Whether support or opposition is displayed, the reserve of the individual is broken down, and the floodgates of feeling are open. If these emotions are carried to further degree, the group turns into a mob.

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[2] See Marten, E. D., *The Behavior of Crowds* (1920).

This untrammeled and emotional expression in a crowd could give its members a sense of absolute rightness. A free expression tends in this direction. If I unburden myself in anger or scorn, this unburdening tends to make me feel very strongly in the right. If I unburden myself in advocating a cause, this unburdening tends to make me feel its absolute rightness. Expression often makes for rightness, and not always the truth of a cause. Emotion tends to make people feel sure. It monopolizes the mind and makes it see only itself.

But whatever the cause of this sense of absolute rightness, it turns out to be a fertile ground for suggestion. Ideas planted in the mind flare up without check or hindrance. The deliberative ability of the mind is at a low ebb. How can there be any discussion in a person's mind in a crowd when he feels a sense of absolute rightness? And this sense of rightness seems to spring up immediately and spontaneously without much or any reasoning.

A feeling of absolute rightness is naturally a playground for suggestion, and is certainly a reason why the latter is rife in a crowd. Convictions should always be checked in private to prevent them from being aggrandized by the play of suggestion in a crowd.

VI. THE PUFFED EGO IN THE CROWD

Another marked characteristic of an individual in the crowd is the tremendous feeling of self-importance.[3] Nowhere does the individual throw out his chest more than in a crowd. He struts and enjoys exhibiting himself to the world. He even invites attention by calling to people from windows, automobiles, and from other observation points, if in a crowd. He gestures and shouts to attract the attention of those who are watching him pass. His ego is stretched to the breaking point.

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[3] *Ibid.*

This ego-exaltation is a strange phenomenon, for it is a paradox. A person generally loses his sense of personal responsibility in a crowd. His individuality appears smothered in the group spirit. Yet his individuality also receives its greatest extension. It seems to be lost and rediscovered at the same time. Yet this paradox may be solved by saying that it is only the individual responsibility that is lost and not individuality itself. Still the latter appears to be fused with the crowd spirit, even though the self is given an extra dose of confidence or conceit.

The origin of the puffed ego in a crowd is, thus, difficult to explain. It may be derived from a sense of absolute rightness, which in turn may be derived from unrestrained expression of emotion. Certainly the sense of absolute rightness can carry with it an accentuated pride. Even a martyr with a conviction of absolute truth can die nobly and bravely because of the supernormal elevation of his sense of self-importance. Strong convictions exalt a man. He is then a trustee of great mental issues.

But whatever the origin of the conceited ego in a crowd, it also tends to make for suggestion. Why should I check up on my thinking if I feel absolutely right? How can I have a doubt that I am right when I am in a strutting mood? Can deliberative and careful picking of the wisest and best ideas be adopted if I already think that my stock of ideas has reached perfection? This is a very important reason why thinking is absent in a crowd. The crowd mind has no doors, and ideas come and go apparently at will without much appraisement.

VII. IN-GROUP SPIRIT IN A CROWD

A very marked characteristic of a crowd is the accentuated in-group spirit as over against an out-group spirit. These two kinds of spirit are interesting phenomena. An in-group spirit is a feeling of "We Belong Together" as against another person or group felt to be on the outside, and often against which there is more or less antagonism. A few people could even accidentally meet on the street as strangers and yet after a little conversation could feel so much together in mind that another who sought to join them might be considered a mental outsider. Even in a classroom a latecomer is looked upon as mentally out, while those already present feel a common unity.

There are permanent as well as temporary in-groups. A certain sorority may always consider itself an in-group and another sorority an out-group. The Republican and Democratic parties are an in-group and out-group. One nation feels itself as an in-group, while another nation is an out-group, toward which the former manifests a dislike.

In a crowd, temporary in nature and often composed of only acquaintances and even strangers, the in-group spirit[4] is often at its height. Let an individual be considered an outsider and he may be treated very roughly. Let another group, temporary or permanent, be regarded as an out-group and the full vial of wrath might be spilled upon it. Hatred is strongest when displayed in a group. We never hate as much alone as we do in a crowd.

Why there is this hatred is a question. It might be on account of the more or less unrestrained emotional expression of the members of the crowd. Buried prejudices and hatreds are no longer suppressed, but ride the top wave of exhibition.

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[4] *Ibid.*

VIII. EXTERNAL POSSESSION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Nothing is more dramatic in a crowd than the sense of being carried away by it. Whether the group is good or bad, the individual appears to be caught up by an external force. He is rushed along as on a mighty tide, and seems powerless to withstand its onrushing strength. It is this characteristic of the crowd that makes our conduct in it strange when compared with our private selves.

When the crowd is moved by a religious frenzy, or by a stirring zeal for a moral, political, or social cause, feeling surges through the mind and transforms it as if from a source external to the self. Persons in such gatherings say that they never feel as glorious at any time when alone. They say, moreover, that such marvelous feelings not only do not but could not originate from the self. They think that they could never experience them in solitude, or in loosely strung groupings of two's and three's. The individual when separated from the group does not possess such qualities, it is maintained. The individual, for instance, is too ordinary when in isolation to provide a soul-rocking experience. So the individual is said to be *seized* in a crowd by an outside spirit that brings its own special experience.

But the same thing is claimed when a person loses his dignified control in a bad crowd. You are watching and waiting for a parade. The people are very closely packed on the walk or pavement. Someone begins to shove. Another steps on your toes, and perhaps on your sore corn. Another gives you a jam in the ribs. Another brushes your hat off, while another almost dislocates your shoulder. You then lose your poise. Anger rises strong. You begin to swear. You jam back the person who jammed you. You push others ruthlessly and do not care whether you step on feet, kick shins, or knock people down. Another accosts you for rough jostling. You counter with a word attack.

More abusive language is heard, fists may even fly, and others may have to separate you.

Such an individual may feel very repentant when he finds himself alone, or with his family. He may feel utterly ashamed of himself, but he refuses real responsibility for his behavior because he says that the crowd spirit *seized* him. He maintains that he is not crude; that his individuality does not include such coarse conduct. He was, he says, in the hands of an outside force. This is his fatalistic conception, and it relieves him of blame.

There has been much discussion as to the meaning of a group mind, whether of an audience, crowd, or mob. The popular theory is that there is a *superpersonal* mind, both in origin and effect, when people gather in a group. Even the late Professor Royce[5] of Harvard advocated his "idealistic community," which is another name for this superpersonal spirit. According to this theory, the group mind does not originate from the minds of single individuals. It is too all-enveloping and far beyond the capacity of individuals to give it birth. It has too much of a touch of the idealistic and ecstatic when good, and too much of a touch of the debased and devilish when bad to be of human origin. It is either too good or it is too bad to arise from the finite mind.

It is also asserted that this crowd or group mind cannot originate even from a collection of individuals. It is not a mere addition of mind to mind, for if it were possible to sift out the contribution from each mind in a group, there would still be a residue left, and this is the group mind or spirit.

Others, such as McDougall,[6] do not believe in the superpersonal group mind, but advocate the *traditional mind.* Scores of beliefs and convictions tenaciously held in a crowd do not originate from any one or number of people in the immediate group. They were passed on by social inheritance. Opinions and ideas are handed on from one generation to another, and these can so sway a crowd that the people appear as though seized by an outside power. But these traditional opinions originated in some mind of an individual in the past, or in several. They were not born from a superpersonal source, though they may stir a crowd as if they did.

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[5] Royce, J., *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908).

[6] McDougall, W., *The Group Mind* (1920).

In addition to the superpersonal and traditional theories of the origin and meaning of the group mind, there is the *individual theory*. According to this theory, every feeling experienced in a crowd, whether worthy or unworthy, has its origin in the mind of that individual. Every experience in a group is not borne in upon one from an outside source, but arises from within. There is in every individual the power for idealism, or the power for revolting debauchery. If a person acts nobly in a crowd, nobility is *already* in his mind: "Once a gentleman, always a gentleman." If a person acts coarsely in a crowd, coarseness is *already* a part of his individual make-up. If a person "goes to pieces" in a crowd, his culture is only skin deep, and was kept intact only by the demands of convention. When convention is not strong enough to keep an individual in the crowd respectable in the face of tremendously disturbing stimuli, the real and cheap man is seen in all of his mental nakedness. "Admirable Creighton" by Barrie is an excellent drama; it shows the worthless lord when he is shipwrecked and has no "society" to boost him, while the butler, whom convention previously kept down, displays real leadership and becomes the admiral of the island. Society, in respect to this view, is just the individual written in the large.

The study of crowd suggestion throws light on these theories of the meaning of a crowd mind, and especially on the superpersonal theory. One of the basic aspects of suggestion is this apparent experience of an outside force seizing a person. Many call it the unconscious phase of suggestion. It is a fundamental meaning of suggestion to have an idea accepted unreservedly, planted in the center of the mind, and going into action *automatically*, or expressing itself in action of *its own* accord, without consent of will or intent. We, therefore, act impersonally in suggestion. An act may surprise and even astonish us, as though another person were inside of us conducting our behavior. If an idea of suggestion makes for its own expression, it is, therefore, very easy to think that an outside force takes command of us in a group.

This is especially true in a crowd, where suggestion is like a sweeping tide. It is then backed up by the sense of absolute rightness, by the puffed ego, and possibly hatred—states of mind which will not tolerate a questioning mind. If in ordinary suggestion of an individual in his privacy there is this automatic effect of suggestion giving an impression of an unconscious control, how much more would this be the case in a crowd? Considering the meaning of crowd suggestion, there is no apparent need of postulating an outside force as being responsible for our idealistic or debased conduct in a crowd.

It may be asked why an individual does not privately rise to the heights of ecstasy, or sink to the depth of degradation as displayed in the crowd. Why is he a very different person in a crowd from what he is when alone if the experience of the former is derived from his individual make-up? The answer is that stimulation when the person is alone is as a rule not powerful enough to arouse the deeper traits. The bad ones, for instance, are covered up and remain so as long as ordinary and individual stimulation remains. But when the tempest of stimulation in a crowd strikes the individual, the veneer is shuffled off. A strong emotion loosens up the inner man. It is the same with very excellent traits. They too are often covered by the routine of life and are seen at their best only when the standardizing and individual routines are set aside. A person is often seen in an excellent light when a social crisis is at hand, as when a person in a camp risks his life to save another from drowning, or when an individual in a crowd, making a critical turn of his mind, gives away his fortune and dies a comparatively poor man. The spirit of a man in a private capacity may not receive sufficient impetus to arouse it to the full measure. It often takes the power of united strength of a group to do this.

Yet even in a private capacity it is impossible to cover up entirely bad or good traits. Coarseness will drop out now and then, as well as the excellent traits that convention usually hides. The veneer of convention is not always thick enough to hide the man. It cracks here and there. We then look through and see the real man, and may easily tell how he would act in a crowd.

But while a person is very suggestible and may even be swept off his feet in a crowd, it is he in the last analysis who makes his own suggestibility. We know that in hypnotism it is impossible to plant an idea in the subject's head which is against his tendencies. We can suggest to a hypnotized individual only ideas to which he is neutral, or not opposed. It is the same with waking suggestion, for hypnotism is only suggestion carried to the nth degree. The principle is the same. There is only a difference in degree.

If a person in a crowd is carried away by poor ideas, it is an indication that he has already a tendency in that direction, or is neutral and has not fortified himself against them. If a person in a crowd is carried away by splendid ideas, it is also because there is already a tendency in this direction, or nothing in his nature is strong enough to counteract them. The type of ideas to which he is suggestible in a crowd indicates the kind of man he is individually.

Let a person individually build into his nature strong and powerful tendencies for the cultural and best in life, and he will be reasonably safe in a crowd and will not be ashamed of his conduct. Bad suggestion will not be his lot. The loose play of ideas in a crowd will not surge through his mind. His fine tendencies will make him immune to contagion of dangerous ideas. His good tendencies will be a playground for only good suggestion. Then it would be not only permissible to be carried away by good suggestion, but it would be wise and beneficial. As we have previously said, our deliberative abilities may hinder the working of worthy ideas in our lives because of too many pros and cons. We often hesitate to be favorably impressed because of too much deliberation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it appropriate to discuss a man's behavior in a crowd as a part of the field of mental hygiene?

2. Should an individual enter the right crowds for inspiring stimulation?

3. Why do people like to talk about their behavior in a crowd?

4. What reasons can you give for people believing in the superpersonal theory of the meaning of a group mind?

5. What is meant by saying that society is the individual man written in the large?

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